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R. D. W. Connor
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THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN ANTE-BELLUM NORTH CAROLINA
1835-1861

By

CLARENCE CLIFFORD NORTON, Ph.D.

Professor of Political Science and Sociology in
Wofford College

CHAPEL HILL
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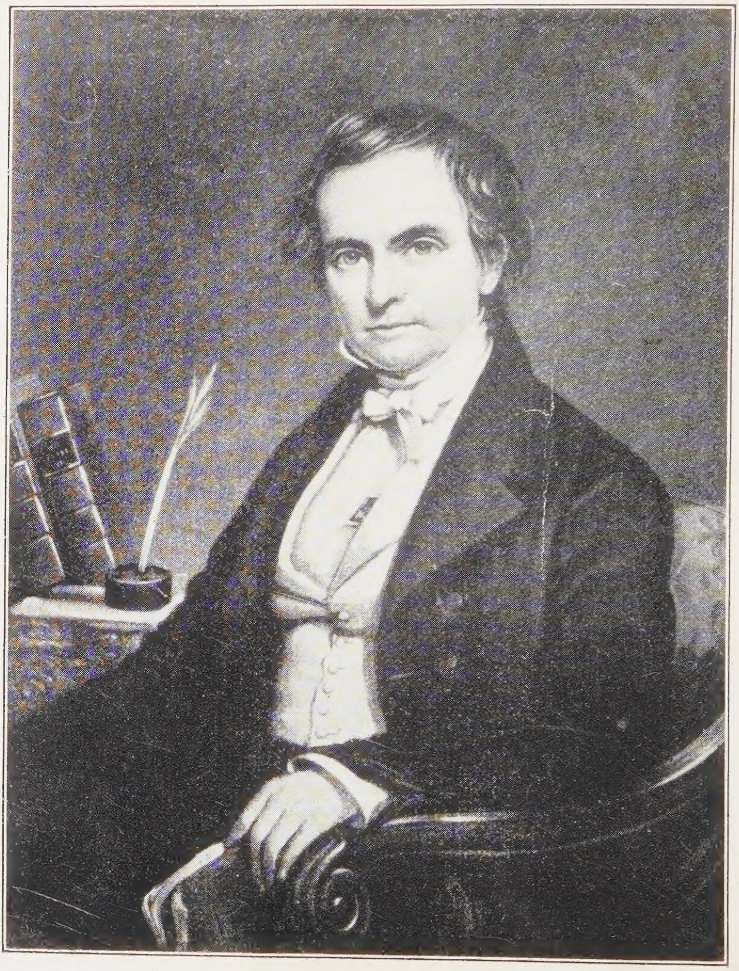

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THE JAMES SPRUNT HISTORICAL STUDIES

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To My Father
REV. HENRY L. NORTON

PREFACE

This book is devoted to the history of the Democratic party in a single state, the account covering one of the most important periods in the history of the United States. The period considered, from 1835 to 1861, is of unusual interest not only because of the development of those great issues that culminated in the Civil War, but also because of its special significance in disclosing the origin and development of much of the party machinery familiar to us at present. Among the many factors that should make the study especially interesting to students of North Carolina history, only two will be mentioned here. One is the fact that the two-party system developed to its highest stage in North Carolina during this period; the other is that between 1835 and 1861 the origin and early development of the state-wide political campaign took place in North Carolina.

The most important subjects that will be considered in the study before us are party machinery and auxiliary agencies, political issues, and campaigns and elections. Party issues have been dealt with apart from the campaigns and elections with a view to having each of these phases of party history stand out more clearly. While some conclusions have been drawn, an attempt has been made to present the subject in a manner that would make superfluous the formal summary or conclusion.

The source material used in the preparation of this book has been largely the newspapers and manuscripts produced during the period under consideration. If quotations abound in the presentation of the subject matter, it is because of a belief that the most nearly adequate understanding of the past comes through a direct contact with historical source material.

In addition to the acknowledgments made in footnotes on the pages that follow, I wish to express indebtedness to Professor J. G. deRoulhac Hamilton, Professor R. D. W. Connor, and Professor W. W. Pierson, Jr., members of the Department of History and Government of the University of North Carolina, and Professor W. L. Pugh and Mr. W. R. Bourne of the Department of English of Wofford College. These men have been very gracious in assisting me in the preparation of this book by their helpful criticisms and valuable suggestions. For the privilege of having free access to the newspaper and manuscript files of the North Carolina State Library and the North Carolina Historical Commission, I am indebted to the entire staff of both of these institutions.

C. C. NORTON

Wofford College
Spartanburg, S. C.

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THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN ANTE-BELLUM NORTH CAROLINA
1835-1861

PART ONE

BACKGROUND AND PARTY MACHINERY

CHAPTER I

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The evident lack of progress in North Carolina during the ante-bellum period was sufficient to cause the state to be designated "Old Rip" by taunting critics from without and dissatisfied agitators from within. A survey of economic, social, and political conditions existing in the state before the Civil War reveals a situation which causes the investigator to agree that the appellation was appropriate. Economic lethargy, social stagnation, and political apathy characterized the state, especially prior to 1835. By this date a few hopeful signs of progress were beginning to appear. "A voice crying in the wilderness" was heard now and then which indicated that the way was being prepared for an awakening. However, the awakening was manifested in little more than the "voice" for some years to come.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The chief industry of North Carolina between 1835 and 1861 was agriculture. Cotton, tobacco, rice, and corn were staple crops. Cotton stood first in importance. As the culture of this crop spread over the state it took the place of tobacco as a staple in certain sections, especially in the coastal plain.[1] By 1840 eastern and southwestern North Carolina were the most important cotton growing sections. By the same date we find tobacco culture largely confined to that northern portion of the state known as the upper Roanoke River districts. Rice culture was chiefly found in the tidewater lowlands of the Cape Fear River. Corn was grown throughout the state.[2]

In addition to the cultivation of the staple crops, three other industries were pursued to a lesser extent by the North Carolinians. Along the coast, fishing engaged a limited number of people for a short time each year. In the East, within a strip of land known as the "pine barrens," a considerable turpentine industry was developed. In the mountain country, particularly in Burke County, mining was done on a small scale.[3]

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[1] R. H. Taylor, *Slaveholding in North Carolina*, p. 33.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 48-51.

Slavery was found most extensively in the cotton and tobacco regions. But the institution was by no means confined to the plantations. The owners of smaller farms often owned a few slaves. Especially was this true of the Scotch-Irish and German farmers of the West. While slave labor increases as we approach 1860, still there are many reasons to believe that the slavery system was wasteful and, on the whole, inefficient.[4]

Farming methods in early nineteenth-century North Carolina were extremely wasteful. Such practices as intelligent rotation of crops and fertilization of land were common only to a very limited extent. The usual method was to wear out the land and then clear new ground and repeat the process. Such a practice was possible because of the cheapness of land. Rarely did farm land sell for more than ten dollars per acre, and more often it could be purchased for from one to three dollars per acre.[5]

In 1835 transportation facilities in North Carolina were wretchedly inadequate; so inadequate, indeed, that the farmer who did not have access to waterways usually produced little for market. The roads were bad in summer and practically impassable during certain months in the winter. Between 1835 and 1861 the state passed through an era of turnpike and railroad building that made considerable improvement in transportation. Notwithstanding such improvements, it must be acknowledged that in 1861 transportation in North Carolina was still far from satisfactory, and energetic and profitable commercial pursuits did not exist to any considerable extent.

THE SOCIAL LIFE

A study of the social life of the early North Carolinians impresses the student with the fact that usually the inhabitants lived a rather colorless existence. Most of the people lived in the country, where there were few social advantages. Poor means of transportation and communication made the problem of rural isolation more serious. Economic stagnation added discontentment to loneliness. In 1854, Calvin H. Wiley, North Carolina's first Superintendent of Common Schools, made the following discouraging statement:

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[3] R. H. Taylor, *Slaveholding in North Carolina*, pp. 38-41.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

> The educated and the uneducated grew up with a carefully inculcated dislike for home—the latter looking to other States as opening wider fields for exertion in the race of improvement; the former taught to believe that talents and acquirements could not be appreciated in North Carolina. It was no exaggeration to say, that the State was a great encampment, while the inhabitants looked upon themselves as tented only for a season, and every year the highways were crowded with hundreds of emigrants, whose sacrifices and losses in selling out and moving would have paid for 20 years their share of public taxes, sufficient to have given to their homes all the fancied advantages of those regions, whither they went to be taxed and to suffer with disease.[6]

Social life was made still more unattractive by the ignorance of the people. The state government took little interest in promoting education. In 1835 Governor Swain in his message to the legislature stated that for fifty years the legislature had not considered education of sufficient importance to give it consideration. In 1817 Archibald D. Murphey, an early leader in the public school movement, submitted to the legislature a plan for a complete and efficient educational system. But the report was "buried beneath an avalanche of legislative indifference."[7] A law in 1839 inaugurated a system of public schools, but the development of the school system was very slow. Public elementary schools were few and high schools did not exist.[8] In 1852 the office of Superintendent of Common Schools was created through the efforts of Calvin H. Wiley. Under his energetic administration educational conditions were considerably improved, but the work of this vigorous educator was of a pioneering character, and he had to battle against much ignorance, indifference, and hostility. He stated that according to the census report of 1850 the proportion of adult white persons in the state who could neither read nor write was one in every three and one-half.[9]

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[6] C. H. Wiley, *Special Report of the General Superintendent of Common Schools of North Carolina*, pp. 22-23. *Legislative Documents, 1854-55*, Executive, Vol. I. Cited hereafter as *Special Report*.

[7] R. D. W. Connor, Lecture on North Carolina History. (Unpublished.)

[8] Wiley, *Special Report*, p. 21.

At the head of the public school system was the State University. This institution underwent an interesting development during the period under consideration, coming to be a more liberal institution in curriculum and more democratic in patronage. Still the masses were scarcely touched by the University, and the poor and ignorant looked upon the institution as a citadel of aristocracy.[10]

In addition to the public school system there were many private schools in the state. A limited number of academies answered the purpose of high schools. These schools were conducted as private enterprises or as denominational schools. The religious denominations also established colleges.

An interesting analysis of North Carolina's educational backwardness was made by Frederick Law Olmsted in his *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States.* The following extract from his analysis will serve as an important explanation of certain conditions that militated against education:

> North Carolina has a proverbial reputation for the ignorance and torpidity of her people; being, in this respect, at the head of the Slave States. I do not find the reason of this in any innate quality of the popular mind; but, rather, in the circumstances under which it finds its development. Owing to the general poverty of the soil in the Eastern part of the State, and to the almost exclusive employment of slave-labor on the soils productive of cotton; owing, also, to the difficulty and expense of reaching market with bulky produce from the interior and western districts, population and wealth is more divided than in other Atlantic States; industry is almost entirely rural, and there is but little communication or concert of action among the small and scattered proprietors of capital. For the same reason, the advantages of education are more difficult to be enjoyed, the distance at which families reside apart preventing children from coming together in such numbers as to give remunerative employment to a teacher. The teachers are, generally, totally unfitted for their business; young men, as a

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[9] Wiley, *Fifth Annual Report,* p. 6. *Legislative Documents, 1858-59.*

[10] Wiley, *Special Report,* p. 16.

clergyman informed me, themselves not only unadvanced beyond the lowest knowledge of the elements of primary school learning, but often coarse, vulgar, and profane in their language and behavior, who take up teaching as a temporary business, to supply the demand of a neighborhood of people as ignorant and uncultivated as themselves.[11]

With such educational conditions it scarcely need be added that the reading public in North Carolina was exceedingly limited. In 1822 there were only twelve newspapers published in the state, and of these only one was published in the western part.[12] By 1836 the number of newspapers had increased to twenty-three.[13] The circulation of all the papers was small. The lack of financial support made the life of the editor miserable and the continued existence of his paper uncertain.[14]

The religious life of North Carolina presented a more hopeful situation in 1835 than the other social interests that have been considered. Due to the social aspects of religious gatherings, as well as to the organizing power of religious interest, a more general response was manifested to the appeals of the Church than to other social institutions. The Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches were growing in membership, influence, and organization. A reawakening was evidenced in the development of the Episcopal Church, a church that for a number of years had fallen under the apathetic spell produced by the environment.[15]

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Government was, to ante-bellum North Carolinians, a necessary evil. Taxation was a burden to be avoided if possible. Political ambition, however, was not lacking. Few disdained a seat in the legislature, but there were times when an intelligent North Carolinian must have wondered if there were any justification for the existence of that body. Often it seemed that its chief item of business was the appropriation of funds for the maintenance of its own existence. Few legislators dared to tamper with the miserably inadequate and unsystematic method of taxation, and little interest could be aroused over a program of progressive legislation.

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[11] P. 407.

[12] *Fayetteville Observer,* April 4, 1859.

[13] *Raleigh Register,* April 5, 1836.

[14] A more complete discussion of North Carolina newspapers will be found in Chapter II.

[15] S. A. Ashe, *History of North Carolina,* II, 408.

A clear understanding of the political situation existing in North Carolina in 1835 requires an examination of the chief features of the government as provided by the Constitution of 1776. The most objectionable feature of this Constitution was its provision for representation. Population was not the basis of representation. Instead, the county basis was used. If we are inclined to attach any significance to population as the basis of representation, such an arrangement was most inequitable. For example, Carteret County with a population of 6,595 had the same representation as Lincoln County with a population of 22,425. The voting population of Carteret was 1,053 compared with 3,642 for Lincoln.[16]

The qualifications for voting and office holding added to the undemocratic character of the government. While any freeman who paid his taxes was entitled to vote for members of the House of Commons, the privilege of voting for a member of the state Senate was given only to those who owned a freehold of fifty acres of land. Furthermore, only those with a freehold of one hundred acres of land were qualified for membership in the House of Commons, and a seat in the state Senate was a privilege within reach only of the citizen who had a freehold of three hundred acres of land. Finally, the property qualification prerequisite to holding the office of governor was a "freehold in lands and tenements above the value of one thousand pounds."[17] Such qualifications meant, of course, that the government was under the control of the landholding class. In fact, the slaveholding class in the eastern portion of the state dominated state politics. An interesting evidence of this fact may be had by examining the voting populations of the East and the West. In 1830 there were sixty-four counties in North Carolina. If we divide the state according to the sectional division that existed at that time, we have thirty-eight counties in the East and twenty-six counties in the West.[18] In the East there were 42,513 white voters and in the West there were 54,763 white voters.[19] The advantage of the East is made clear when we note that this section had a representation of eighty members in the House of Commons and thirty-eight in the Senate, while the western counties were represented by fifty-four members in the House of Commons and twenty-six members in the Senate.

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[16] Based on the 1830 Census. By "voting population" is meant white males above the age of twenty and free men of color above the age of twenty-four.

[17] B. P. Poore, "Constitution of 1776," *Federal and State Constitutions*, p. 1412.

Other noticeably undemocratic features of the Constitution were: a religious test for office holding; the selection of the governor and other important state officials by the legislature; life tenure for judges; no adequate procedure for impeachment of judicial officials; and no specified provision for amending the Constitution.

It has already been suggested that the state was divided on a sectional basis. The reasons for this division were the geographical, industrial, and social differences between the two sections. The West was the mountainous and back-country section; the East, the coastal plain and old settled section. The West was a section of small farms; the East had most of the large plantations. Slavery was more largely concentrated in the East than in the West. Bearing in mind such differences as these and remembering the political advantage that the East had over the West under the Constitution of 1776, we are not at loss to understand why the two sections were divided politically in a manner that threatened the unity and obstructed the progress of the state.

It was largely due to a ceaseless agitation on the part of the West that the constitutional convention was called in 1835. The reforms made by this convention were revolutionary and mark the beginning of a new political era for North Carolina. The county unit of representation was replaced by representation based on population. Borough representation was abolished. The religious test for office holding was purged of its sectarian though not of its religious character. Free persons of color were disfranchised. The election of the governor was taken from the legislature and given to the people. The governor's term of office was increased to two years, and the sessions of the legislature were changed from annual to biennial. A definite mode for amending the Constitution was provided. Finally, the constitutional changes proposed by the convention were submitted to the people for ratification.

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[18] The dividing line between East and West is usually drawn along the western boundary of Granville, Wake, Cumberland, and Robeson counties.

[19] Based on the 1830 Census.

Some idea of the foreshadowing of a new period in the political history of North Carolina, which was made possible by the Convention of 1835, may be had from the following observations of a North Carolina historian:

> The influences of these changes on the industrial, intellectual and political life of the State can not easily be overestimated. They ushered in an era of progress that within the next quarter-century raised North Carolina from the lowest to the highest rank among the slave-holding States in those things that make for the material and intellectual uplift of the people. . . . Two political institutions, brought into existence by the work of this convention, though unrecognized by the Constitution, have been potent factors in the evolution of Democracy in North Carolina. One of these is the party State Convention, the other, the pre-election canvass of the State by party nominees for State offices. So long as the Governor was chosen by the Legislature, the people not only had no voice in his election, but had even less voice in selecting the party candidates. This was done by a small coterie of party leaders—in modern political parlance, the ring—whose followers in the Legislature merely ratified their choice. . . . The change from this method of selecting party nominees to selection by a convention in spite of all the party convention's defects, was a long step toward democratic rule. Under the former method, inasmuch as the people had no voice in deciding political issues, there was no reason for discussing them from the stump. When the election of the Governor was given to the people, however, it brought with it of necessity the pre-election campaign. Foreseeing this result, many conservative statesmen opposed the amendment changing the mode of electing Governors. One of the delegates in the convention declared that he had lately seen a gentleman from Tennessee, where the Governor was elected by the people, who told him that "candidates were traveling through the State on an electioneering campaign at expense and trouble to themselves and great annoyance to the people." Although

all of us will probably admit that at times this custom has proved annoying, nevertheless none will dispute, I suppose, that it has brought the people into closer touch with their government, imposed upon them a greater responsibility in the determination of governmental policies, and greatly advanced the cause of democracy.[20]

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[20] R. D. W. Connor, "Historical Foundations of Democracy in North Carolina," *Minutes of the 13th Annual Session of the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association.* 1912.

CHAPTER II

NEWSPAPERS AND CAMPAIGN LITERATURE

Strength of Democratic Newspapers in North Carolina

Reference has been made in the foregoing chapters to the status of newspapers in North Carolina. If it be acknowledged that the newspapers as a whole were weak, it must be admitted that the Democratic press was relatively weaker. Of the twenty-three political papers in the state in 1836, only six supported the Van Buren and Johnson ticket.[1] By 1840 the number of papers had increased to thirty-one, of which number twenty-five were political newspapers. Seventeen of these papers were Whig and eight were Democratic.[2] In 1844 the Whigs had twenty papers and the Democrats had seven.[3] Four years later the Whig papers had increased to twenty-one and the Democratic papers to ten.[4] As we approach 1860, there is a steady increase in the number of Democratic papers, due to the decline of the Whig party. In September, 1859, the *North Carolina Standard* indicated that there were eighteen Democratic papers in the state, including the following: the *North Carolina Standard* (Raleigh), the *Wilmington Journal,* the *Goldsborough Tribune*, the *Murfreesborough Citizen,* the *Tarborough Mercury,* the *Fayetteville Carolinian,* the *Western Sentinel* (Winston), the *Salisbury Banner,* the *Charlotte Democrat,* the *Warrenton News,* the *Democratic Press* (Raleigh), the *Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), the *Williamston Banner,* the *New Bern Daily Delta,* the *Wilson Ledger,* the *Tarborough Southerner,* the *Halifax Democrat,* and the *Asheville News.*[5] In listing the foregoing papers the *Standard* noted that two of them had temporarily suspended publication (the *Democratic*

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[1] *North Carolina Standard,* March 3, 1836. Hereafter this paper will be cited as the *Standard.*

[2] J. G. deR. Hamilton, *Party Politics in North Carolina, 1835-1860,* p. 78. Hereafter this book will be cited as *Party Politics.*

[3] *Democratic Signal* (Raleigh), September 6, 1844.

[4] *Standard,* January 19, 1848.

[5] *Standard,* September 28, 1851.

Pioneer and the *Williamston Banner*), and a third, the *New Bern Daily Delta*, had united with a larger paper, the *Salisbury Banner*.[6]

Notice of temporary suspension or discontinuance of publication was not uncommon among Democratic newspapers of North Carolina prior to 1860.[7] Equally common were notices of changes in editors and of advertisements offering newspapers for sale. Lack of support made the existence of many Democratic papers very uncertain. Practically every newspaper, at one time or another, made complaint because of the embarrassing indifference of the public to newspaper obligations. For example, the *North Carolina Standard* announced in 1842 that the paper had lost six thousand dollars during a period of five and one-half years through collectors, insolvent subscribers, and runaway subscribers; this paper further stated that it was due at that time ten thousand dollars on back subscriptions.[8] Later on in the year the *Standard* dropped 677 names from its subscription list because of the failure of the subscribers to pay their arrears on subscriptions. Such conditions did not seem to improve as the years passed. Fourteen years later, when the

[6] The following is a fairly complete list of Democratic newspapers established in North Carolina between 1835 and 1861: the *Asheville News;* the *Highland Messenger* (Asheville); the *Western Democrat* (Charlotte); the *Mecklenburg Jeffersonian* (Charlotte); *Charlotte Bulletin;* the *Hornet's Nest and True Southerner* (Charlotte), which joined the Democratic ranks in 1850; the *Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City); the *North Carolinian* (Fayetteville); the *Courier* (Fayetteville); *Goldsborough Tribune; Goldsborough Rough Notes;* the *North Carolina Republican* (Goldsboro); the *District Democrat* (Henderson); the *Hillsboro Plaindealer;* the *Orange Democrat* (Hillsboro); the *Orange Ratoon* (Hillsboro), later changed to the *North Carolina Democrat; Murfreesborough Citizen;* the *New Bern Inquirer; Ad Valorem Banner* (Raleigh); the *Adder* (Raleigh); the *State Journal* (Raleigh); the *National Democrat* (Raleigh); the *Democratic Signal* (Raleigh); the *North Carolina Statesman* (Raleigh); the *Mountain Banner* (Rutherfordton), bought by a Democratic editor in 1850; the *Rutherfordton Democrat;* the *Salisbury Banner;* the *Shelby Eagle;* the *Tarborough Mercury;* the *Warrenton News;* the *Washington Times;* the *Washington Democrat;* the *Wilmington Journal;* the *Carolina Gazette* (Wilmington); the *Democratic Free Press* (Wilmington); the *Wilson Ledger;* the *Western Sentinel* (Winston), a Democratic paper in 1859; and the *Rubicon* (Yanceyville). Some of these papers had a brief existence, especially those that were established for the advocacy of temporary issues.

[7] Among the more important papers that suspended publication between 1835 and 1861 were the *Lincoln Republican*, the *Washington Republican*, the *Democratic Signal* (Raleigh), the *Mecklenburg Jeffersonian*, the *North Carolina Statesman*, and the *Warrenton Reporter*.

[8] *Standard,* January 10, 1842.

Standard was under the editorship of perhaps the most efficient editor in the state at that time, we read this announcement: "We have paid out, in commissions for collecting since we have been publishing the *Standard,* not less than three thousand dollars; and we have actually lost, by the credit system, not less than ten thousand dollars—and this with as good a subscription list as there is in the Southern States."[9]

THE LEADING DEMOCRATIC NEWSPAPERS

While it would be tedious to follow the history of all the Democratic newspapers existing in North Carolina between 1835 and 1860, it will be of value to notice the leading historical facts regarding several of the more important periodicals. Leadership among the Democratic papers of the state was assumed by the *North Carolina Standard,* this paper being considered the official organ of the party from 1835 to 1860. The *Standard* was established by Philo White in 1834. White was a native of New York who came to North Carolina in 1820, settling first in Salisbury. Here he published the *Western Carolinian* until 1830, when he was appointed Navy Agent for the Pacific Station. In 1834 he returned to North Carolina and located in Raleigh, where he established the *North Carolina Standard.* He proved himself an aggressive editor, demonstrating considerable ability as an editorial writer. But he did not remain long in the editor's chair. In 1836 he sold his paper to Thomas Loring, who had already been connected with the *Standard* for a short time as publisher and proprietor. In severing his connection with the *Standard,* White explained that in conducting his paper he had "followed the promptings of patriotism, rather than the dictates of a prudent thrift . . . and nature and reason, therefore, demanded that he should, for a season at least, withdraw from the political arena, and endeavor to provide the means of comfort for himself and household."[10] White left the state in 1837, and afterwards followed a rather checkered career, holding various offices in the Territory of Wisconsin and under the Federal Government. His last days were spent in his native State of New York. In later life, in a letter to William W. Holden, one of his successors as editor of the *Standard,* he penned an expression of "deep affection for the good old North State," his "political foster mother."[11]

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[9] *Standard,* January 23, 1856.

[10] *Ibid.,* December 14, 1836.

Thomas Loring, the second editor of the *Standard,* was, as was his predecessor, a northern man. He was a native of Massachusetts, but previously to his coming to Raleigh he had edited a newspaper of neutral political complexion in Wilmington.[12] Loring did not at first show the disposition to use the villifying language toward his political enemies that had been so much in evidence between White and the various editors of the opposition press. There is evidence that when Loring took over the *Standard* he was determined that there should be built up in North Carolina a code of newspaper ethics that would make the warfare between editors less offensive. In 1837 he was instrumental in calling a state editorial convention in which, under his leadership, resolutions were adopted deprecating the tendency of newspapers to deal in "personalities and indecorous language." These resolutions further expressed the desirability of good will among the editors of the state and strongly condemned any tendency of a newspaper to violate the "sanctity of private life."[13] Loring attempted to keep these ideals before the press and to practise them himself, and consequently there was a lack of that fiery spirit of contest in his paper that had been so much in evidence during the editorship of White. The milder tone of the paper, the panic of 1837, and the decline in the political fortunes of the Democratic party brought to the *Standard* a gradual decline in support. This condition brought some embitterment to the editor, a feeling that was increased by the sarcastic taunts of the *Raleigh Register* and other Whig newspapers that refused to conform to his newspaper ethics. Hence, in time, we find Loring using the kind of language that he had been so solicitous to avoid at the beginning of his career in Raleigh.

But Loring was not alone in his dissatisfaction. Many of the leaders of the Democratic party were dissatisfied with him as an editor. The first serious break between the editor and the leaders came in 1840. In the *Standard* of September 30, 1840, it was announced that the editor would be compelled to be absent from Raleigh for a short time and that in his absence his place would be filled by Henry I. Toole. This was the beginning of the short connection of Toole with the *Standard* as associate editor, a connection which added to the embarrassment of Loring, not, however, because of any disagreement between Toole and himself. The embarrassment came rather in the demand of a number of the Democratic leaders that Toole be made editor of the *Standard*. The prospective editor was a young man of impulsive enthusiasm, but as a newspaper writer he was neither convincing nor powerful. He filled the paper with amateurish outbursts that at times seemed to have but one virtue—enthusiasm; but a lack of enthusiasm was a glaring fault of the *Standard* under Loring, and since the Democratic leaders were looking for a new editor, they urged Toole to take over the *Standard*. Loring was approached on the matter; he offered to sell the newspaper, but at a price that Toole and his supporters were unwilling to pay. The dissatisfied element then proposed that a new Democratic paper, to be called the *Southern Times,* be established; but after some consideration this project was abandoned. Loring then offered his paper on better terms, stating that he was ready to satisfy both Toole and his friends that he was willing to make way for the young man. But by this time Toole's editorial enthusiasm had waned. He wrote Loring declining the offer, stating that his connection with the press had not been "a matter of prudential consideration but purely of impulse."[14] After assuring the editor of the *Standard* that his interests were no longer inclined to newspaper work, Toole further assured his former colleague that he bore no ill will toward him, and concluded his letter with an offer to do what he could to exonerate him from the accusation that the *Standard* had been under the influence or control of William H. Haywood, Jr.[15] After this affair Loring's ardor as a Democrat was considerably cooled, and, consequently, his paper further dwindled in circulation and influence.

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[11] W. W. Holden, *Address on the History of Journalism in North Carolina,* delivered in Winston, June 21, 1881.

[12] *Standard,* January 14, 1836.

[13] *Ibid.,* November 8, 1837.

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[14] The impulse came again, however, for later we find Toole editor of a paper in Wilmington, the *Aurora*.

[15] *Standard,* May 5, 1841.

In 1843 the final break between Loring and the Democratic leaders came when the editor was read out of the party by a member of the General Assembly. This incident was the result of certain editorials in the *Standard* which gave expression to views on the state bank issue that were considered traitorous to the Democratic party.[16] After a bitter controversy Loring was glad to dispose of the *Standard* to William W. Holden, an ambitious young newspaper man. Loring remained in Raleigh and established a nonpartisan paper called the *Independent*. In 1844 he joined the Whig party. In taking this step he wrote Van Buren that he had decided to do so because "the wishes of the Democratic party have been defeated by a club who have the dismemberment of the Union in view . . . & that club, with Calhoun at its head, dictated the measures of the Baltimore Convention, & controlled its action."[17] It is not to be expected that the Whigs would exhibit unusual joy over the decision of Loring; yet a few gave him welcome. The *Southern Citizen* asked, "Brother Whig: don't you think we've made an admirably good swap—Mr. Holden for Mr. Loring?"[18] But it was not so good as it might have seemed. Loring was never again a leader of influence in the state. His undertaking in Raleigh soon failed. He attempted other ventures, drifting from one paper to another throughout the state, but after 1843 his political influence was of little importance. Holden, on the other hand, was at the beginning of a most eventful and influential career.

William W. Holden was a native of Hillsboro, North Carolina. He had been reared as a newspaper apprentice. Going to Raleigh in 1837 he found employment with the *Raleigh Star*, a Whig newspaper. For the next six years he divided his time between newspaper work and the study and practice of law. He had been a Whig in politics but found no difficulty in changing to the Democratic party because of his resentment at the growing aristocratic tendencies of the Whig party in the state and because of his ambitious desire to obtain a place of leadership as a newspaper editor.[19] The responsibility for the selection of Holden to take over the *Standard* rests with James B. Shepard, who had been watching the course of the young man and had concluded that he had the abilities necessary to make a success of the all but dead Democratic newspaper. Shepard presented the name of Holden as prospective editor of the *Standard* to a meeting of leading Democrats only to be strongly opposed at first. But Shepard was persistent and finally won his point. Since Holden was without means to purchase the paper, he borrowed five hundred dollars from Shepard and two thousand dollars from Duncan Cameron, president of the old State Bank. On lending Holden the money Cameron advised him to give up the idea of practising law and devote himself solely to the work of his newspaper, saying that he would find it "the surest, if not the quickest and most permanent and certain road to power."[20] Holden took his advice and was amply rewarded in following it. He proved himself a clear and forceful writer and demonstrated a spirit of aggressive optimism that renewed the hopes of a despairing party. His name will appear often as a leader as we follow the political fortunes of the Democratic party between 1843 and 1861. Because he is so inseparably connected with the development of the Democratic party during this period we shall defer extended consideration of his leadership and activities until we consider the campaigns and elections.

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[16] For a discussion of this matter see *infra*, pp. 389-91.

[17] Thomas Loring to Martin Van Buren, June 29, 1843, The North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

[18] *Southern Citizen* (Asheboro), June 26, 1844.

In 1854 Frank I. Wilson was employed as associate editor of the *Standard*. Wilson had formerly edited the *Salisbury Banner*. He was a man of attractive personality and had demonstrated good business ability. His chief work in his new position was superintending the business of the newspaper and attending to the editorial duties in the absence of Holden. Wilson remained with the *Standard* for five years. During that time he developed a sufficient interest in politics in Raleigh to

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[19] Hamilton, *Party Politics*, p. 90.

[20] W. K. Boyd, "William W. Holden," *An Annual Publication of Historical Papers, Published by the Historical Society of Trinity College*, Series III (1899). Hereafter referred to as *Trinity College Historical Papers*.

WILLIAM W. HOLDEN

make for himself some bitter enemies. On resigning his post he offered the following explanation:

> One of my chief reasons for desiring to withdraw from the editorial department of the *Standard* is, that I may avoid even the appearance of making Mr. Holden responsible for my acts or opinions, and to take from the mouth of fault-seekers the perversions they invent to my sentiments and expressions, and charging them to his account. Certain persons in certain quarters, hostile to me because I am a Western man, but still more hostile to Mr. Holden because he is considered in somebody's way to political promotion, have, for some time past, been ready and eager to catch at my articles, mostly written as I have said, in Mr. Holden's absence, (which fact they know) and to pervert them and distort them, and then hold Mr. Holden responsible and refuse to accept any explanation. Not only so, but "fellows of the baser sort," determined, if possible to injure Mr. Holden by any and every means, have insulted me, (not to my face) by insinuating that I was instigated and instructed by Mr. Holden to pursue the course I have pursued in some public meetings, and even to use expressions that I have used publicly on the streets and elsewhere. . . . Mr. Holden has his opinions and I have mine. He expresses his as he chooses and I do the same. We have never differed on any essential principles; and it has rarely been the case that we could not agree on details and non-essentials. In an intercourse as intimate as could exist between two men, for the past five years, not one unpleasant word has been spoken by either that I am aware of . . . and in withdrawing, as I do, voluntarily and as a matter of choice, from the *Standard*, there is no man I more highly esteem than its future sole editor.[21]

Wilson was correct in designating Holden as the "future sole editor" of the *Standard,* for after the resignation of the associate editor, Holden assumed undivided responsibility for the editorship of his paper. He produced a very creditable paper, as newspapers went in those days. In addition to his own editorials, there were from time to time series of articles by others who were interested in the fortunes of the Democratic party and other matters of public concern. Some of the contributed articles were of commendable merit. During the sessions of the General Assembly the *Standard* usually gave fairly complete and accurate reports of the daily sessions of each house. A Washington correspondent sent in weekly letters giving a summary of the events in the national capital. Until 1850 the *Standard* was a weekly publication, but after that date both a weekly and a semi-weekly edition were issued. This paper, under Holden's direction, more than any other agency, deserves credit for building up the Democratic party during a period of discouraging reverses.

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[21] *Standard,* November 2, 1859.

Of the other Democratic papers of the eastern section of North Carolina, the *Wilmington Journal* stands out most conspicuously. Prior to the establishment of the *Journal,* the *Democratic Messenger,* edited by Dr. Price, had served the Democrats of Wilmington and the lower coast country. But Price discontinued his paper in June, 1844, thus leaving Wilmington without a Democratic newspaper. In view of the impending elections of that year the situation was considered embarrassing and deplorable by the Democrats of that section of the state. It was under such circumstances that the opportunity was afforded David Fulton, a young man from Raleigh, to establish the *Wilmington Journal.* Fulton associated with himself in the undertaking A. L. Price, who took charge of the business management of the paper.[22]

The first issue of the *Journal* appeared September 21, 1844. The paper was well edited from the first and soon grew to be one of the leading journals in the state. In 1846, as a result of liberal patronage, it was enlarged and improved in appearance. Further enlargement and improvement took place in 1849. In 1850 announcement was made that the *Journal* would be issued daily as soon as the mail facilities should warrant the venture.[23] This undertaking was launched in 1852 and proved to be very successful. David Fulton died in 1848, and the editorial work of the paper was carried on by the publisher until March, 1849, when James Fulton, brother of the deceased editor, took over the duties. The new editor had been connected for a short time with the *Mecklenburg Jeffersonian* and had shown himself to be a newspaper man of some ability.[24] Soon after taking over the *Journal* he proved himself the equal, if not the superior, of his brother in conducting the paper.

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[22] *Wilmington Journal,* September 21, 1844.

[23] *Ibid.,* August 30, 1850.

The newspapers of the West were fewer in number and inferior in quality when compared to those of the East. Among the most influential of the western Democratic papers were the *Mecklenburg Jeffersonian* and the *Asheville News.* The *Mecklenburg Jeffersonian* was established in Charlotte on January 1, 1841. This paper announced in its prospectus that it would assume as its creed "those landmarks of the Republican party, the doctrines set forth in the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions," and would oppose monopoly, discriminative legislation, the United States Bank, internal improvements by the general government, high tariff, and abolition.[25] Joseph W. Hampton was editor of the *Jeffersonian* during nearly the whole of its existence. He was considered an able editor, but not always a "regular" as a party man. At one time he was affiliated with the Whig party. While editor of the *Jeffersonian,* he was characterized by certain of his political enemies as "the most reckless editor in the state."[26] At any rate Hampton thought for himself and on more than one occasion exhibited some of the spirit of individualism so characteristic of the West. The evidence of such a spirit was manifested in a bitter controversy between the *Jeffersonian* and the *Standard* in 1843, a controversy occasioned by the *Jeffersonian's* attitude on the question of a prospective presidential candidate.[27] Notwithstanding the independence of the *Jeffersonian,* the paper did good work for the Democratic party in the West; in fact, during the early forties it was the only Democratic newspaper in the West. Besides Hampton, two other editors, James Fulton and Samuel C. Crawford, held brief connection with the paper.[28] The *Jeffersonian* announced in 1847 a temporary suspension of publication and shortly thereafter ceased to appear.

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[24] *Standard,* April 4, 1849.

[25] *Ibid.,* December 23, 1840.

[26] *Raleigh Register,* February 14, 1843.

[27] This matter is more fully dealt with *infra,* p. 13.

[28] *Standard,* April 3, 1844.

The *Asheville News* was established in 1849, having as its first editor T. W. Atkin. While Atkin demonstrated only mediocre ability as an editor, his work as a party servant in a section of the state where Whig sentiment prevailed is not to be discounted. He was especially interested in Southern Rights. In 1852 Thomas L. Clingman, who had for many years been the Whig idol of the West, went over to the Democratic party as a leader in the mountain district on the issue of Southern Rights, and Atkin threw himself into the campaign with Clingman; as a result, his paper grew in circulation and influence. In 1854 Atkin announced that although he would continue his connection with the *News* as publisher, Marcus Erwin would in the future be the editor. Erwin was a Methodist preacher who demonstrated no marked ability as an editor. The combination did not prove successful, and consequently the *News* was advertised for sale in 1857. As a financial venture the Asheville paper was like the majority of the early North Carolina newspapers—a disappointing failure. For example, in 1857 Atkin announced that he had lost by the credit system since he had been a publisher in Asheville at least ten thousand dollars.[29] It appears that the mountain people, like many other North Carolinians, considered the trouble of reading a newspaper a sufficient price to pay for it.

Atkin was unable to sell his paper in 1857; so he again assumed entire control of it. The *News* was of particular service to the Democratic party because of its location, being for a time the sole Democratic newspaper in the extreme western portion of the state.

RELATIONS AMONG NEWSPAPERS

An examination of the relations existing among the newspapers before the Civil War reveals some cordiality and much acrimonious controversy. Within the party ranks it may be expected, of course, that the relationship in general would be cordial. The papers copied material from one another freely, commended their brethren of the type for good services rendered the party, and welcomed new papers into the field. Still, the relations among the Democratic newspapers were not always congenial. In fact some very bitter battles were waged among the Democratic editors. An interesting example of such an encounter may be found in the controversy between the *North Carolina Standard* and the *Mecklenburg Jeffersonian* over the prospective presidential candidate in 1843. The *Jeffersonian* was printing the name of Calhoun at the head of its editorial column each week with the announcement that the South Carolinian was its candidate for president. In one editorial this western newspaper went so far as to state that there were many Democrats at heart who wished to return to their first love but could not do so as old leaders and friends of Van Buren were put forward for office. The *Standard*, doubtless having already viewed the rather premature Calhoun boom with disfavor, now came out in an editorial condemning both the action of the *Jeffersonian* in placing Calhoun's name before the people prior to a nominating convention and the suggestion that partisans of Van Buren were keeping men out of the Democratic party. The *Standard* suggested that those "sick" Democrats should "stay sick of the association."[30] With such a beginning, each new edition of the papers brought new developments in the controversy. As the warfare progressed the editor of the *Jeffersonian* discovered the editor of the *Standard* to be no longer a Democrat. The accusation was just such an opportunity as the editor of the *Standard* had been seeking from his antagonist, who had at one time been a Whig. "Forty years is a long time to have Federalism in the heart and Democracy on the lips—don't you think so, Mr. Jeffersonian?" asked the editor of the *Standard*, who continued with the observation, "The Editor of the *Jeffersonian* is, of course, a Democrat at heart. You were very much a Democrat at heart, were you not, Mr. Jeffersonian, when a few years ago you leagued with Federalism and broke down the Democracy of the Union?"[31]

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[29] *Asheville News*, November 12, 1857.

In such a manner the controversy continued until a weary correspondent wrote the *Standard* a plea for peace. But Editor Loring answered his correspondent that it was necessary to defend himself, stating that he had been "assailed and insulted for stating a fact."[32] While engaged in this controversy, the *Standard* was forced to defend its position on the bank issue because of attacks brought by two other Democratic papers, the *Washington Republican* and the *Fayetteville North Carolinian*. It was in the midst of this struggle that Loring turned the *Standard* over to Holden. Holden had no serious tilts with his brethren of the Democratic press until the state was under the control of the Democratic party during the last decade before the Civil War. Then a period of party factions brought on a newspaper warfare such as had never been witnessed in the state before.[33]

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[30] *Standard*, January 4, 1843.

[31] *Ibid.*, January 25, 1843.

The controversies between Democratic and Whig papers were continuous. Inasmuch as North Carolina could look forward to at least one political campaign each year, plenty of material for controversy was afforded the papers. Naturally the Raleigh newspapers took the lead in the altercations. Philo White, the first editor of the *Standard*, took the jeers of the Whig papers in Raleigh quite seriously, and at times his replies were filled with a bitterness that might be taken as evidence of an irascible disposition. The following extract from one of his editorials is not an unusual example of the type of answer that the Whig presses sometimes got in reply to an attack on their Democratic adversary:

> In reference to the filthy garbage which is continually flung at the Editor of the *Standard* from certain "mud-machines" of the nullifiers & federal whigs, he would barely remark, that he usually turns such things over to the *scavenger*. There are certain vermin, whose annoyance one had better endure, than suffer the stench that arises from crushing them! And the Editor cannot and will not prostrate the dignity of his vocation into the *gutter*, by bandying scurrility with those profligate prints. The ferocity and *foulness* of one and the *meanness*, and mendacity of another, like the offensive liquid emitted by a certain little animal, are their safest protection from the foot or cane of the passer-by.[34]

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[32] *Standard*, February 15, 1843.

[33] The period of Party Factions is fully dealt with in Part IV of this volume.

[34] *Standard*, November 10, 1836.

As has been indicated, White's successor, Loring, came to the editorship of the *Standard* with a determination that he would not be involved in the extreme language that had come to characterize newspaper controversies in Raleigh.[35] But Loring had been editor of the *Standard* only a few months when he felt it necessary to "step into the filthy arena" to warn the *Register* and the *Star* regarding abusive language. It is not surprising that these Whig papers gave no signs of repenting, for Loring had accused them in his rebuke of expressing sentiments that indicated a "vile ambition that furnished the filthy titillation producing the vulgar haw! haw! from men of empty heads or corrupt hearts."[36] By the time Loring had reached the end of his career as a Democratic editor he could be as caustic as any man in the state.

When Holden made his editorial début in 1843, newspaper warfare took on a new impetus. This editor of the *Standard* proved himself a master of sarcasm. He opened a campaign against the Whigs that was cutting without being villainous. As usual the Whig presses retaliated by dealing in personalities. The following extract from the *Fayetteville Observer* will serve to illustrate this fact:

> People talk about a Mr. William W. Holden in a very ugly manner hereabouts. There are naughty folks that even accuse him of this very crime of treason—treason to his friends, his benefactors, his party. They charge him with having bartered his conscience for filthy lucre; of suddenly crossing over to the enemy in broad day-light and belying his whole past life.
>
> Even good Democrats in this vicinage quietly admit these charges, and we must frankly tell our august accuser and judge, that no man of any party here regards or respects him. Those he acts with constantly fear him—they know not how soon in the very thickest of the fight he may turn his weapons; while the uncharitable Whigs loathe him, as being diseased with a vile moral leprosy, that has not left a single virtue unconsumed amid his thousand meannesses and vices.[37]

The reply of Holden to this acrimonious fling was simple and forceful. He stated briefly, "We can say as many hard things as most men, when we choose; but we have no bitter words for Mr. Hale. He is welcome to use such language—we leave our moral character, unimpeached and untarnished, in the hands of those who have known us from our infancy."[38] As Holden developed in ability he gave his political enemies cause for alertness and, at times, apparent cause for uneasiness. The following editorial from the *Raleigh Star* indicates that by 1847 some of the editorials of the *Standard* were such as to justify the Whigs in making an "appeal to decency":

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[35] See *supra*, p. 347.

[36] *Standard*, July 2, 1837.

[37] Quoted in *ibid.*, May 7, 1845.

> What man of sense and honor is there in the Democratic party of North Carolina, who does not tremble and blush for his party, when he sees, week after week, the columns of their organ crowded with the rankest and most bareface and reckless slanders upon the principles and patriotism of their political opponents? Does he not justly fear that unless the party, by suitable rebuke, shall show their disapprobation of such unfair, unprincipled and malignant assaults upon their fellow-citizens, whom they know and acknowledge to be as patriotic and upright as themselves, that all men of honorable feelings must withdraw from them in disgust?[39]

Editorials of this type also appeared in the *Standard* from time to time, displaying the same pretense of outraged decency. For example: "The Editor of the *Register* indulges in language in his last issue with reference to the Editor of this paper, which is the language of a blackguard. The Editor of that paper excels in that department; we shall not attempt to imitate or follow him in this respect."[40]

Of the papers outside Raleigh, the *Fayetteville Observer* and the *Wilmington Journal* engaged in some lively contests. The *Fayetteville Observer* also assumed the duty of keeping the *Fayetteville North Carolinian* and the *North Carolina Standard* informed of their political follies and inconsistencies. However, the battles were not so exciting as those conducted by the Raleigh papers. The smaller papers published elsewhere in the state showed less tendency to become involved in personal controversies. The *Washington Republican* was, however, an exception to this general statement, for it was one of the most satirical of the smaller publications. It was reported that the Whigs in Washington went so far as to threaten to destroy the press and assault the editor of the *Republican*.[41] A further illustration of the intense feeling excited against the paper is given in the following extract from a letter received by the editor of the *Republican* as a result of an attack made in his paper on a favorite Whig of Washington:

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[38] *Standard.*

[39] The *Raleigh Star and North Carolina Gazette,* February 10, 1847.

[40] *Standard,* July 15, 1854.

> Sir Editor:—You are an old gray headed knave, villain, scoundrel, and notorious infidel. Before you came amongst us, we were a quiet peaceable family. But the moment you came out with your damned Republican, as you call it, there has been nothing here but strife and contention. What right had you to attack in his absence, our worthy representative, Mr. Stanly? . . . It depends upon you retracting this vile slander, whether or not I shall apply to your shoulders, the "cowhiding" with which you threaten the Editor of the Whig for no other purpose than to intimidate him from discharging the important duties which he owes to his party.[42]

Such examples might lead one to believe that the newspaper business in ante-bellum days was a dangerous calling. Perhaps it was no more dangerous than it is now; nevertheless, that the editors had their troubles is evident from William W. Holden's career. By 1861 he had received five challenges to duels and had been shot at twice on the streets of Raleigh.[43] Holden's attitude toward dueling was similar to that held by many of his contemporary fellow editors—he refused to accept challenges on the ground that dueling is immoral.

We should not close the discussion on newspapers leaving the impression that relations between the papers of the different parties were always hostile. The truth is, though hostility was the rule, yet, between battles, kindly expressions were sometimes exchanged by enemy papers. Certain polite customs existed such as giving welcome to new publications regardless of party, friendly comment on improvement in appearance of an opposition paper, or expressions of sympathy in case of a misfortune

[41] *Standard*, June 19, 1839.

[42] Quoted in *ibid.*

[43] *Ibid.*, May 22, 1861; *Raleigh Register*, February 6, 1861.

affecting a paper of the opposing party. Now and then under some pleasing provocation an editor with reserved dignity would apologetically present a stiff compliment to an enemy paper. Such an example is given in the act of the *Wilmington Journal* in expressing a kindly feeling toward the *Fayetteville Observer,* but doubting at the same time whether the expression would be acceptable to the *Observer.* Whereupon the *Observer* hastened to accept the tender of good feeling and assured the *Journal* that in "future contest with the politics of the Journal . . . we shall not forget that it is its politics only that we are at war with."[44] Both papers were preparing for the Civil War. It might further be observed that the *Standard* on occasions expressed admiration for the talents of a Whig editor—especially if he had died or was giving up his paper.

PAMPHLETS AND OTHER CAMPAIGN LITERATURE

In addition to newspapers, other printed matter, such as pamphlets, handbills, and circular letters, was used during the political campaigns. The franking privilege was employed extensively by some of the congressmen for campaign purposes. Needless to state the practice caused some criticism. For example, one voter wrote Senator Willie P. Mangum criticizing the Democratic congressman, James I. McKay, with the statement, "McKay is the most damned scoundrel that the world can boast of. He never sends anything but on his own side."[45] In a heated campaign the political leaders in the state sometimes made a direct appeal to the congressmen to flood the state with Democratic documents. An example of such an appeal is found in a letter written to Congressman David S. Reid by Louis D. Henry, one of the most active Democratic politicians in the state. "I would suggest," Henry wrote, "that our Democratic representatives hold a meeting & take measures to flood the doubtful districts in our state with documents, especially the West We cannot, like the Whigs, raise funds & circulate our newspapers, & the work must be done by an effort of that kind at Washington, & especially *now*, whilst you can take the state at this new juncture of affairs."[46]

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[44] *Fayetteville Observer,* January 14, 1856.

[45] Lewis Dishough to Willie P. Mangum, March 23, 1836, Willie P. Mangum Papers, 1835-39.

The newspaper publishers also printed speeches and other campaign material in pamphlet form for distribution. In the campaign of 1844 such activities caused real uneasiness among the Whig leaders. On July 10, the Whig governor, John M. Morehead, wrote to Willie P. Mangum, a Whig Senator, "Most extraordinary efforts are made to carry the elections of this state—Haywood receives whole bags of documents by the mails & the press here is engaged in striking off tracts, & they are sending them off by the small wagon loads to different parts of the state—While the Whigs seem to think the opposition not very serious & are not so zealous as they should be."[47]

An interesting practice was the issuing of secret circulars by the party committees and newspapers. Such circulars were generally issued just before the election and were supposed to furnish confidential information regarding the activities of the enemy and the plans of the party issuing the circular. Invariably the opposition party got a copy of the "secret" circular and "exposed" it. If necessary an extra edition of the party newspaper was issued to accomplish the "exposure." Both parties followed the practice of issuing such secret circulars and both parties condemned them as cowardly and villainous. "We defy any honest man," wrote the *Fayetteville Observer*, in commenting on the practice, "to say that he believes that truth is the object of such publications, or fairness the means by which the object is to be accomplished."[48]

Handbills were issued by the party organizations, newspapers, and candidates. The candidate for the state legislature often used the handbill to give an account of his past services and politics when seeking reëlection, and sometimes public officials when retiring from office adopted this means of giving an account of their services.

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[46] Louis D. Henry to David S. Reid, January 21, 1846, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. II (1845-50).

[47] John M. Morehead to Willie P. Mangum, July 10, 1844, Willie P. Mangum Papers, 1843-44.

[48] *Fayetteville Observer*, August 6, 1839.

The foregoing discussion of the campaign literature used in North Carolina between 1835 and 1861 indicates that, though the reading public in the state might have been limited, those who did read were afforded not only political information but also excitement and entertainment. We find that the Democrats were at a disadvantage during most of the period because a large majority of the newspapers of the state were under the control of the Whig party. To some extent this deficiency was met by a rather extensive use of pamphlets and circulars. Both parties realized the value of campaign literature, and as the years passed, effective use of printed matter developed considerably, especially with the Democratic party. The growth of the party under the leadership of the *Standard* during the editorship of Holden might be offered in substantiation of this statement.

CHAPTER III

PARTY ORGANIZATION

Because state-wide political campaigns were unknown in North Carolina before the constitutional convention of 1835, party machinery was not highly developed prior to that date. But as we advance in the period after 1835 the development of party organization becomes noticeable. Old machinery was retained and new organization was inaugurated.

THE PARTY CAUCUS

Under the system existing before 1835 of selecting the important officials of the state, the party caucus played an important rôle as a part of party machinery. Inasmuch as the revised constitution left the power of selecting all state officials except the governor with the General Assembly, which also had the power to elect the United States senators, the caucus remained an important party agency for many years after the Convention of 1835. Caucus meetings were held frequently by the Democratic party before, during, and after the meeting of the General Assembly. While these meetings were supposed to be secret, the opposition papers generally got sufficient information regarding their action to enable them to give as accurate an account as the Whig press of Raleigh chose to give.

There was nothing uncommon about the organization and procedure of the Democratic caucus meetings. The usual officials, including the presiding officer, secretaries, and doorkeepers, were elected. The work of the caucus embraced the selection of candidates, sometimes including an expression of choice for president and vice-president of the United States; the passage of resolutions sustaining or condemning the course of the state's delegation in Congress; upholding the policies of the party; and condemning the policies and activities of the opposition. It scarcely need be added that matters to come before the caucus were almost always prepared beforehand by the leading politicians of the party. Yet it was not uncommon for factions within the party to spoil the best laid plans of politicians and produce a result within the Democratic caucus that was highly satisfactory to the opposition.

COUNTY MEETINGS

When we turn to the party organization that more directly involved the electorate, we find that the county meeting was one of its most important agencies. The county meeting was convened by some prominent party leader's giving notice in a newspaper, when possible; or posting public notice; or calling a meeting during the session of the county court. The last method was a very common one. When the meeting convened a chairman and secretaries were nominated and elected, and the convention was opened by an address from the chair. The next business was the selection of a committee on resolutions, which was made by nomination and election, or by appointment of the chairman. The committee would then retire from the meeting to formulate resolutions and nominations. During their absence various members of the convention and visiting politicians were called upon for addresses. On the return of the resolutions committee their recommendations were read, discussed, and adopted. The committee usually included in their report resolutions that indicated the following: the attitude of the party on the leading issues of the day; a statement of preference for state and national candidates; nominations of local candidates; selections of delegates to district and state conventions; and selections of vigilance committees. Some county meetings, however, did not give such complete authority to the committee on resolutions. In many cases the county officers were nominated from the floor and the various committees and delegates were frequently appointed by the chairman. Sometimes there was a fairly general agreement among county conventions in their expressions of preference for a Democratic candidate for governor. When this was the case, these expressions had considerable influence in determining the nominee of the state convention. The opinions of county meetings on issues present an interesting cross-section of the political beliefs and disbeliefs of the Democrats. There was a sameness in the expressions that might be interpreted as indicating either harmonious uniformity or political stagnation among the rank and file of the party, or the following of a common pattern in the composition of the resolutions.

In addition to the regular county organization, special meetings were sometimes called. Whenever any notable party triumph had been achieved in the passage of legislation in harmony with some cardinal principle of the party, it was not uncommon for the leaders in the more progressive counties to call meetings to congratulate the county on its good fortune. The members of the party were also called together to express disapproval when the enemy had achieved success or a Democrat had proved himself false to the doctrines of his party.

County conventions were numerous between 1835 and 1861. It was customary to send reports of their proceedings to the *North Carolina Standard* for publication. One may judge with some degree of accuracy the interest in the various political campaigns from the number of reports received by the *Standard*. The greatest number of meetings were held during the years preceding and including the presidential elections. The largest number reported to the *Standard* between 1835 and 1861 was in 1859 when seventy-eight were reported.

DISTRICT MEETINGS

The district conventions, as has been intimated, were composed of delegates selected by the county organizations. Such meetings were called for the purpose of selecting presidential electors, delegates to the national conventions, and candidates for Congress, and for passing resolutions on political issues. The organization and procedure of the district meeting were similar to that of the county meeting, with the exception of the manner of voting. In the beginning of the district organization there was no regular system of voting. The method used at first, which came to be generally adopted, was to give each county the same voting strength. But as competition for the district nominations developed, especially in congressional campaigns, this method proved unsatisfactory. Out of the dissatisfaction occasioned by the old system, or lack of system of voting, came a method that gave a proportionate vote to the counties within the district, the proportion being based on the party strength. So by 1845 we find the Democrats of the second congressional district passing a resolution which provided that each county within the district should be entitled to one vote in the convention for every one hundred Democratic votes polled in the last presidential election, with the additional provision that all fractions over fifty should entitle any county to an additional vote.[1]

Congressional candidates seeking the nomination of the district convention, of course began their campaign before its meeting, announcing that their candidacy was subject to the action of the convention. Disappointed aspirants sometimes ran against the party nominee, thus dividing the Democratic vote. The result of such procedure is obvious in case the party strength was fairly equally divided between the Democrats and the opposition.

STATE CONVENTIONS

Until 1840 the Democrats in North Carolina had no statewide organization corresponding to the county and district meetings. But in that year the party held its first state convention.[2] As has already been shown, the delegates to the state conventions were selected by the county meetings. No definite limit was set to the number of delegates that might be sent by each county, but voting, as will be shown later, was limited. The convention was organized with a temporary chairman who was replaced by a president when the organization was perfected. Other officers were a vice-president for each district represented and two secretaries. In its procedure the convention followed the rules of order used by the House of Commons of the state legislature. One of its first acts was the selection of two committees, a committee to draft a platform and a committee to frame an address to the people. The latter, as a rule, was not more than half as large as the former.

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[1] *Standard,* January 18, 1845.

[2] The Whigs held the first state convention in North Carolina in November, 1839.

Until 1848 the platform of the state convention, as in the case of the county and district resolutions, was usually largely devoted to national issues. But as we approach the end of the period under consideration, we find a tendency to give more attention to state affairs. The platform on being presented to the convention might be adopted as a whole, or, as in the case of the platform adopted by the first Democratic state convention, it might be adopted item by item. Sometimes the platform committee acted as a nominating committee and included in its report the nomination of a candidate for governor.

In case the nomination was not made by the platform committee, nominations were made from the floor of the convention. In some cases the candidate was practically settled on before the meeting of the convention. If there was a fair degree of unanimity among the county meetings on a candidate, the selection of the convention became obvious. When the counties were fairly well divided between two candidates, the convention might choose between them. The leading politicians of the party had much to do with the selection of the candidate. A group of these leaders in Raleigh who came to be designated as the "Raleigh clique" usually had a good deal to do with determining the choice of the candidates.

The address to the people was a campaign document to be printed and distributed among the voters. It was not always issued by the state convention, at times being issued by the central committee of the party. Campaign arguments, supplementing and to some extent duplicating the platform, constituted the subject matter of the address.

Voting in the state convention for candidates was put on a county unit basis in 1840, each county being entitled to a number of votes equivalent to its representation in the House of Commons of the General Assembly.[3] Voting on matters other than the nomination of candidates was on a per capita basis. In 1852 the *Wilmington Journal* stated its objection to this method of voting, observing that "in all probability the delegation from Wake County outnumbered those from two-thirds of the rest of the state," so that in matters other than the selection of candidates the state convention "ceases to be in fact a convention and is really to all intents and purposes a Wake County mass meeting."[4] In 1858 modification in the voting for the candidate for governor was made, following the suggestion of the *Wilmington Journal* that the "delegates from each County shall cast the whole number of votes polled in their respective Counties for the Democratic candidate for Governor at the last election."[5]

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[3] *Standard,* January 15, 1840.

In the years when the national convention was to meet, the state convention selected a part of the state's delegation, usually two members. In 1852 the *Goldsboro Republican and Patriot* suggested that the state convention be empowered to select all the delegates to the national convention, and the *Fayetteville Carolinian* endorsed the idea; but the *Wilmington Journal* came out in a vigorous opposition to it. According to the *Journal* such a move meant centralization which would bring ruin to the party.[6] The suggestion was finally dropped, and the system of having delegates selected in part by district conventions and in part by the state convention was continued.

CENTRAL AND LOCAL COMMITTEES

The Central Committee constituted another unit in the party organization. Before the first state convention this committee had been selected by the party caucus during the session of the legislature. The Central Committee thus selected in 1839 was admitted to membership in the first state convention. After 1840 the appointment of the Central Committee was usually the function of the chairman of the state convention. Always the committee acted as the party executive committee between campaigns, working in the interest of both state and national tickets. The publication of addresses to the people, the preparation and distribution of campaign literature, the direction of the campaigns, and the determining of the time and place for the meeting of the state convention, were the chief duties of the Central Committee.

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[4] *Wilmington Journal*, January 30, 1852.

[5] *Ibid.*, March 8, 1858.

[6] *Ibid.*, January 30, 1852.

A local committee doing a work similar to that of the Central Committee was the Committee of Vigilance. This committee was supposed to be active in keeping in touch with the individual voter and doing such services for the party as opportunity afforded. It was customary for the county meeting to appoint the Committee of Vigilance. Needless to state, the activity of the Committee depended on its personnel. There is little to indicate the actual services of these committees, but judging by the results of some of the campaigns we may conclude that there must often have been committees without vigilance.

THE DEMOCRATIC ASSOCIATION

Another local organization devised to promote the interest of the party was the Democratic Association. The Association as organized in Wake County in 1844 will serve as an example of this organization. Its officers were the president, two vice-presidents, a recording secretary, a corresponding secretary, and a treasurer. There were two standing committees, composed of five members each, one charged with the duties of procuring new members, preparing business for the association, and securing speakers for the meeting; the other, a committee on finance. Twenty members of the association constituted a quorum. On the request of any five members the president or either of the vice-presidents could call a meeting. The constitution of the association forbade the treasurer to pay out money without a certificate given by the president, or one of the vice-presidents, and countersigned by the recording secretary.[7]

The general purpose of the Democratic Association was to keep before the public the ideals of the party and to add to its membership. Sometimes an association was formed for a specific purpose. In Wilmington, for example, during the campaign of 1848, the organization was used to arouse the interest of young men and rally them to the Democratic cause.[8] But the Young Men's Democratic Association of Wilmington did little more than hold a few meetings which gave the politicians additional opportunities to speak. In 1856 the Democrats of

[7] *Standard,* April 3, 1844.

[8] *Wilmington Journal,* October 16, 1848.

Wilmington again formed an association, this time with a view to combating the Whigs in a city election.[9] For a time, considerable interest was shown in this last organization, but its life was brief. Indeed, it was usually found difficult to maintain an interest sufficient to keep such organizations intact, and it is not surprising, therefore, that they were formed in only a few places in the state.

ACTIVITIES OF THE CANDIDATES

In addition to the activities of the various organizations of the party, the individual candidates were quite active. A speaking tour was considered as essential then as now. Joint debates were not uncommon. Public dinners and barbecues were added attractions to which the voter often looked forward with anticipations not entirely political. In a state that afforded little to break the monotony of the routine of life, the political campaign, to the average voter, was more than a part of the machinery of democratic government—it was a means of entertainment, of social intercourse, and sometimes of excitement. For example, at Beaufort in 1858 political issues were temporarily forgotten by the crowd when the candidates for governor staged a fist fight during a joint debate.[10] Sometimes the audience afforded the excitement, as the following characterization of a political meeting held in 1843 will indicate:

> We learn from the "North State Whig," that recently Mr. Arrington, went to places called Chocowinity and North Creek, in Beaufort County, where, after he had delivered his speech, a gentleman present was called on to reply, but no sooner had he mounted the stand, than he was assailed with "Whooping, shouting, yelling, noises of drums and fiddle, and cries of 'Down with him! Knock him off the stand! Whoop! Hurrah! A nice business this, that a d——d Whig should be following our candidate to reply to him! Whoop! Go it fellows! Raise a shout! Hurrah for Arrington! Down with Whiggery! Whoop! Whoop!' "[11]

But it must not be understood that the Democrats alone were apt in creating scenes of political excitement. For every example set forth by the Whigs as an illustration of Democratic disorder, the Democrats without difficulty could find a Whig counterpart. Each party complained of the disorders of the other; sometimes the accusation was sweeping. In 1836 the *Standard* reported that it was at the risk of their lives that many Democrats in the western part of the state voted for the Democratic candidate for governor. One of the inspectors was accused of not allowing anyone to vote for the Democratic candidate.[12]

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[9] *Wilmington Journal,* January 11, 1856.

[10] *Carolina Watchman* (Salisbury), June 22, 1858.

[11] *Raleigh Register,* July 14, 1843.

While, perhaps, it would be an exaggeration to state that on election day the voting places were generally places of disorder, it is true that disorderly conduct quite often interfered with the elections. The intensity of feeling excited by political campaigns sometimes made this inevitable, and the common use of liquor on election day added to the demoralization. Asa Biggs, a Democratic congressman, gives in his autobiography the following interesting statement regarding the practice of "treating" during campaigns and elections:

> It had been the invariable custom . . . for candidates to "treat" with spirituous liquors while canvassing and at the election. I adopted the custom in 1840 to a moderate extent, but my observation satisfied me this practice was highly pernicious, and ought to be abandoned and therefore I refused to "treat" in 1842. This originated numerous false reports, as to my purposes—such as a desire to compel by law all the fruit trees to be destroyed and to prohibit the introduction of foreign liquors.[13]

In 1846 the *Standard* condemned "treating" during campaigns and elections. This paper stated that both parties had been at fault, but of course condemned the Whigs as being the more notorious offenders of the two.[14]

Electioneering at the polls was sometimes organized. For example, in 1842 the Democratic Central Committee sent a letter to a leading Democrat in each county requesting that he appoint an efficient party man to represent the Democratic party at each polling place. There was no official ballot; therefore this agent was to be supplied with tickets and to make it his business to have them put in use.[15]

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[12] *Standard,* October 6, 1836.

[13] *Autobiography,* p. 7.

[14] *Standard,* September 16, 1846.

CONCLUSION ON PARTY MACHINERY

The foregoing discussion will indicate that the organization of the Democratic party in North Carolina was, in form, adequate for the needs of the time. The party failures were due not to any insufficiency in the machinery, but to the ineffectual uses of such machinery. The Whigs had practically the same machinery, but, before 1850, used it with greater effectiveness. In 1847 Holden implied as much in a letter to David S. Reid, in which he expressed opposition to long campaigns, stating that when the campaign was prolonged the adversary had time to put into full use his many devices for obtaining votes.[16]

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[15] Democratic Central Committee to David S. Reid, 1842, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. I (1803-45).

[16] W. W. Holden to David S. Reid, December 8, 1847, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. II (1845-48).

PART TWO

A PERIOD OF DEMOCRATIC REVERSES, 1835-1843

CHAPTER IV

THE PARTY AND POLITICAL ISSUES, 1835-1843

THE CONVENTION OF 1835 AS A PARTY ISSUE

The Democratic party of North Carolina between the years 1835 and 1843 was unprogressive and reactionary. Especially did its members manifest an opposition to projects designed to make changes affecting local conditions. This conservatism was much in evidence when the Democrats of the state faced the issues that culminated in the Convention of 1835. Without doubt some of the most significant state issues contemplated by ante-bellum North Carolinians were fought out in this famous convention, the general political significance of which has already been considered.[1] It is now necessary to seek an understanding of its party significance.

The issues which resulted in the calling of the convention, as has already been suggested, were primarily sectional rather than party issues.[2] Notwithstanding this fact there is much to be considered from the party point of view in the study of the constitutional changes of 1835. This is true because the attitude of the two sections of the state on the issues involved reflected characteristic attitudes of the two parties between 1835 and 1848. In fact it would not be incorrect to state that a crystallization of the characteristic policies of the Whigs and Democrats was accomplished to a considerable degree by the results of the Convention of 1835. The call of the convention had been a fight of the West against the strong opposition of the East. The West stood for progressive changes because its inhabitants would greatly profit thereby. The East opposed constitutional changes because the existing system was favorable to that section. Doubtless many in the East could foresee in western control of the legislature a program of internal improvements and other advanced legislation which would be profitable to the West and expensive to the East. To the western citizen the opposition of the East to constitutional changes meant a selfish and stubborn determination to cheat the West out of its just rights. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that the new Whig party found fertile soil for growth in the discontented section of the state. Such conditions help to explain why the East remained conservative and Democratic and the West became liberal and Whig.

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[1] See Chapter I.

[2] See *supra*, p. 341.

But it must not be inferred that party lines and sectional lines were identical when the vote was cast on the convention issue. The vote in the General Assembly of 1834-35 on the proposal to call a constitutional convention showed that the West was practically unanimously in favor of the convention, while only a small number of eastern legislators favored the measure; but an examination of the party affiliation of the members shows a substantial Democratic vote in favor of the convention. In the House of Commons the vote stood sixty-six votes for the convention and sixty-two against it; of the sixty-six voters favoring the convention at least thirty were Democrats, and of the sixty-two opponents of the convention at least thirty-five were Democrats. The vote in the Senate on the convention issue was thirty-one in favor of the measure and twenty-nine opposed to it. At least thirteen Democratic senators were included in the number who favored the convention and eighteen Democratic senators among those who voted against it.[3] The obvious explanation of the Democratic votes favoring the convention is found in the fact that most of these votes were cast by legislators from the West. Notwithstanding the fact that the Whigs were fast gaining ground in that section of the state in 1834, the Democratic party still polled a considerable western vote. A few members of the Democratic party in the East favored the convention, the most conspicuous of whom was William H. Haywood, Jr., of Wake County. In 1833 he wrote Martin Van Buren that North Carolina had always favored the existing state of things, and that he had declined further service in the General Assembly because his constituency would not allow him to vote for a convention but instructed him to vote otherwise.[4] In citing Haywood's attitude it should be stated, however, that he was never closely bound by party ties; in fact he was more than once in hostile relations to his party. When the convention bill had passed in the General Assembly, the leading Democratic newspaper in the state expressed the following opinion on the matter:

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[3] The vote of the General Assembly on the resolution instructing Senator Willie P. Mangum to vote for the "Expunging Resolutions" has been used in determining party affiliations of the members of the General Assembly of 1834-35.

> We sincerely rejoice in this event, and hope its friends will realize all they have anticipated on the subject; and that those who have heretofore strenuously opposed the measure, will find their fears more imaginary than real, and that the best interests of the people will be promoted by the settlement of this vexed question, which has for thirty years exercised a baleful influence on the legislature of the State.[5]

On the whole, the party issue was not much in evidence during the campaign conducted for the election of delegates to the constitutional convention. The following editorial from the *Edenton Gazette* indicates that it was unusual to conduct the campaign on a party basis: "We understand the election for Delegates to the State Convention was made a party question in the County of Gates and that the Jackson men succeeded. The people of Gates must have thought they were electing representatives to the Baltimore Convention."[6]

The Convention of 1835 contained one hundred and twenty-eight delegates, among whom were a number of influential Democrats. The group included the venerable Nathaniel Macon, who had been a leading Democrat for a quarter of a century. He had the respect of all parties and was unanimously elected president of the convention. Other prominent Democrats who took an important part in its work were Weldon N. Edwards, John Branch, Asa Biggs, Kimbrough Jones, Richard Dobbs Spaight, Louis D. Wilson, and Charles Fisher. But the convention was not Democratic in complexion. Romulus M. Saunders wrote President Van Buren, "I find a decided majority of the opposition in the convention and this not only stimulates them, but enables them whilst here to arrange their summer campaign."[7] The *Raleigh Register* boasted that the Whigs had a majority of forty or fifty in the convention, to which the *Standard* replied that a count of the parties represented had showed fifty-five of the members to be Jackson Democrats. The Democratic paper stated: "A great many of the Whig members were smuggled in under the cry of 'no party question!' At the August elections, however, the Democrats will saddle the right horse again—and then out the 'white surry' to the pasture."[8] The *Standard* was not far wrong in its estimate of the party affiliation of the members of the convention; an examination of the reports of party meetings, party literature, and other sources designating party affiliation, indicates that out of the one hundred and twenty-eight members of the convention fifty-three were Democrats and seventy-five were Whigs.

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[4] William H. Haywood, Jr., to Martin Van Buren, Jan. 10, 1833, North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

[5] *Standard,* January 9, 1835.

[6] *Raleigh Star,* June 4, 1835.

A study of the votes in the Convention of 1835 shows that members did not vote along party lines. In fact, the issues before the convention were not of a nature that would excite party feeling to any great extent. The final vote on the revised Constitution stood thirty-two Democrats for adoption and eight opposed, while forty-eight Whigs voted for adoption and eleven opposed. Nathaniel Macon was among the few that opposed the adoption of the amended Constitution. He explained that he could not give his assent to the abandonment of annual elections and that he preferred that the election of the governor should remain a function of the General Assembly. The convention respected Macon but did not follow his leadership.

The proposed amendments were submitted to the people for ratification or rejection. As in the preceding election there was no great amount of party feeling in evidence. The *Raleigh Register,* however, found sufficient excuse for the following protest:

> CAN IT BE POSSIBLE?—We learn that in some portions of this State, the Van Buren men are endeavoring to make the vote on the ratification of the amendment to the Constitution A PARTY

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[7] R. M. Saunders to Martin Van Buren, July 1, 1835, North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

[8] *Standard,* July 24, 1835.

ONE! In Cumberland County, it is said, that the friends of Mr. Van Buren will go dead against "ratification," for no better reason than because the convention, which recommended the amendments to the people, was WHIG to the core. We do not vouch for this, but we assert it on highly respectable authority.[9]

The vote on the amendments followed sectional lines. Every eastern county, except Granville, voted to reject the amendments and every western county voted to ratify. Still it would be incorrect to conclude that there was nothing of party significance in this fact. This sectional grouping was the foundation of the future party alignments. More and more the West came to be considered the Whig stronghold and the East the Democratic stronghold. The aggressive spirit of the West was the heritage of the Whig party of the state; the conservatism of the East continued to dominate the Democratic party.

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS AND OTHER STATE ISSUES

After the Convention of 1835, state issues were almost unknown to North Carolina politics for a number of years. There was, however, some slight recognition of the necessity of giving more attention to state affairs. One evidence of this fact was a long series of articles written by a correspondent to the *Standard*. The articles appeared during the years 1837 and 1838 over the signature "Mentor." They dealt with such matters as state finance and internal improvements in an attempt to excite general interest in such matters by introducing them as party issues. The author lamented the fact that national issues controlled the state elections and called for a more consistent program in state politics. The articles doubtless bore some fruit, but slowly.

One issue that received an ever increasing recognition was the question of internal improvements. At first the Democrats stood almost solidly against the various proposals that came under this general classification. The reason for their attitude is not difficult to understand. In the first place, it was a part of the party politics of Jacksonian Democrats to oppose internal improvements by the general government and this attitude was naturally transferred to the issue as associated with the state government in spite of the fact that the questions involved in both cases were not the same. Nathaniel Macon was for many years a leading opponent of internal improvements by governmental aid, and his attitude had come to be accepted by his large following in North Carolina. Another reason for Democratic opposition to internal improvements by state aid was the adherence of the party to a philosophy of individualism which resulted in an established attitude on economy. The Democrats believed in an economy in conducting the government which might be characterized as a begrudging stinginess that stood in the way of progress.

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[9] *Raleigh Register*, September 22, 1835.

But a number of the more progressive Democrats abandoned the traditional attitude of their party on the internal improvements issue. The *Fayetteville Carolinian* announced in 1839 that it favored internal improvements, especially when local conditions were to be improved. In the same year the *Standard* took a position on the issue that was characterized by sanity and caution. The salient portion of its attitude is expressed in the following passage:

> We profess to be friendly to Internal Improvements, and we know that our professions are sincere. It is a noble cause; a most important one to the welfare of the State, and indispensable to her advancement in wealth and greatness. But it is an injury to the cause itself when men take the lead in it, who overload it with extravagance. Public opinion will reject Internal Improvements altogether, rather than submit to the burdens of boundless debt.[10]

In 1842 the *Standard* made the following statement, which indicated the attitude of the Democrats on the issue at that time: "The Democratic party, as a party, has opposed Internal Improvements in North Carolina by state aid. When leading Democrats have taken a stand for that *cause,* it has been done, however honestly, at the hazard of losing influence and popularity with their own party."[11] As the years passed the Democratic party came to be more liberal on this issue, and this change was very largely due to the influence of the *Standard*.

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[10] *Standard,* February 13, 1839.

[11] *Ibid.,* June 22, 1842.

Another issue of state interest that was receiving attention by 1838 was the matter of public schools. A correspondent writing to the *Standard* under the caption "State Matters" called for a display of interest in this question and suggested that it be made a political issue in the state campaigns.[12] Other writers followed with similar appeals. In 1839 the General Assembly made the matter of taxation for public schools optional with the counties. Two years later a system of public schools was established. But if we except the favorable attitude maintained by the *Standard,* it must be acknowledged that the Democrats manifested little inclination to interest themselves in the matter of giving to the state a creditable educational system until the last decade before the Civil War. It was largely left to the Whigs to lay the foundations of the public school system.

During the early forties also the advocates of humanitarian legislation were beginning to create some interest in North Carolina in their reforms. In 1842 the *Standard* carried an able plea for the revision of the criminal code of the state. This newspaper called attention to the fact that there were twenty-five crimes listed in the laws of North Carolina which carried the death penalty as punishment in the first instance, and fifteen crimes punishable by death for the second offense. It characterized the code as a "dark catalogue for a civilized and Christian country" and offered suggestions for the reformation of the system.[13] But when reform came it was chiefly under the direction and leadership of the Whigs.

But there was one state issue that the Democratic party could claim from the beginning: the free and equal suffrage issue. The development of this issue belongs to another period, but the beginning of the interest in the question may be traced to an earlier date than the time when it was made a party matter. On June 26, 1839, the *Standard* declared, "The Democratic party does not believe, with the Federalist, 'that free suffrage is a curse to any people'—but that the mass of the people are the lawful and best judges of the qualifications of any candidate for office, from President down."[14] In 1840 Green W. Caldwell, a Democratic member of the House of Commons from Mecklenburg County, brought the matter of free suffrage before the General Assembly. The *Register* noted that the question received a cold reception and referred to it as a "dangerous and leveling innovation."[15]

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[12] *Standard,* June 20, 1838.

[13] *Ibid.,* November 9, 1842.

A suffrage meeting was held in Kinston, Lenoir County, on June 4, 1842, which passed a series of resolutions condemning property qualifications for voting and office holding. The free suffrage issue was presented in a bold and comprehensive manner, as the following quotations will indicate:

> *Resolved*, That in the opinion of this meeting, that the article in the Constitution of our State which requires a property qualification, to entitle a man to vote for members of the Senate, in the legislature, is Anti-Republican: Also, that other articles which require a property qualification to constitute a man eligible to office of profit is Anti-Republican.
>
> *Resolved,* That in the opinion of this meeting, the principle of equal rights of suffrage, independent of property qualifications, is Republican.
>
> *Resolved,* That the members of this meeting are in favor of Equal Rights of Suffrage, without property qualification as being Republican.[16]

The Kinston meeting designated a committee to address letters to the candidates for governor in 1842 requesting that these candidates should express themselves on the free suffrage issue,[17] but the matter did not come to be a political issue at that time. Louis D. Henry, the Democratic candidate for governor, overlooked the possibilities of an issue that was to be successfully used at a later date by one of the most adroit of Democratic leaders.

THE PREDOMINANCE OF NATIONAL ISSUES

While the Democrats manifested no considerable interest in state issues during the period under consideration, there was a good deal of interest shown in national politics. However, not much spirit of initiative was evidenced by the Democrats in national politics; in most cases the creeds of the party were stated in negative terms. More energy was expended in opposing issues than was expended in supporting them. An example of the emphasis placed on national politics may be had in the following resolutions passed by a meeting of Democrats in Cumberland County in which a test for fitness for *state* officers was being made:

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[14] *Standard,* June 26, 1839.

[15] J. S. Bassett, *Suffrage in the State of North Carolina,* p. 281.

[16] *Standard,* June 22, 1842.

[17] *Ibid.*

> Do you pledge yourself as opposed:
>
> 1. To the Bank of the United States, and to allowing any branch or agency in this State, and to the circulation of its notes in this State?
> 2. Are you a Democrat and in favor of the right of instruction?
> 3. Are you opposed to monopolies, and exclusive privileges?
> 4. Are you opposed to nullification, and the extravagant schemes of internal improvements by the Federal Government?
> 5. Are you a strict constructionist of the Federal Government?
> 6. Are you a Jackson VAN BUREN man?[18]

Examples of this practice of conducting state campaigns wholly on national issues might be given at great length, but one further instance will suffice to illustrate the custom. In 1842 when Louis D. Henry was nominated by the Democrats for governor his formal acceptance of the nomination filled nearly ten columns of the *Standard*. One might have judged Henry to be a candidate for president of the United States rather than a candidate for governor of North Carolina, for his address was devoted to national politics. After reviewing all the issues before the nation and passing judgment on each he concluded by suggesting the following as a motto for the campaign: "Free Trade—No taxes for protection—No monopolies or exclusive privileges—Bank Reform."[19]

The organ of the Democratic party in North Carolina gave the following summary as the political creed of the party in 1839:

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[18] *Standard*, April 7, 1836.

[19] *Ibid.*, February 16, 1842.

> The Democratic Republican party believes, 1st, In a rigid and safe construction of the constitution. 2nd, They are opposed to a National Bank. 3rd, They are opposed to the recognition of any system of internal improvements by the General Government. 4th, They are opposed to a high and oppressive protective tariff. 5th, They are opposed to all legalized monopolies destructive to the public weal. 6th, They are opposed to abolition and to any league or concert with abolitionists.[20]

The national issues receiving the greatest amount of attention between 1835 and 1843 were the national bank, the disposition of public lands, the tariff, and the abolition movement.

THE BANK ISSUE

The very word "bank" was sufficient to excite the political animosities of North Carolina Democrats. Probably most of the Democrats did not know or understand the economic questions involved in the banking system, but that mattered little. The fact that Jackson opposed the institution was sufficient justification for loyal Democrats to feel that there was something wrong with banks. An interesting illustration of this loyalty to Jackson on the bank issue is found in a circular issued by James M. Hutchinson, of Mecklenburg County, who was a candidate for the House of Commons. The major portion of Hutchinson's campaign circular is devoted to a justification of President Jackson's course in his war on the banks.[21] Of course candidates for Congress also expressed their approval of the course of Jackson in this matter. Abraham Rencher in a circular to his constituency stated:

> The veto of the President, of 1832, to the bill rechartering the Bank of the United States met with my hearty approbation and support. . . . It is known to you that I voted against the bill. . . . I have not since changed my opinion. . . . I think it unwise to renew the charters of any banks. If we must have banks, and they have become a necessary evil, let us grant new charters rather than renew charters of old ones, and thereby perpetuate these monied monopolies; such monopolies are dangerous to free institutions, and should be guarded against.[22]

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[20] *Standard*, June 26, 1839.

[21] *Freemen of Mecklenburg.* (A circular dated January 22, 1835.)

[22] *Circular of Abraham Rencher, To the Freemen of the Tenth Congressional District of North Carolina.* (A pamphlet dated 1835.)

During 1835 and 1836 the prejudice of the Democrats on the bank question grew in strength. Then came the panic of 1837 which put the party on the defensive. The Whig leaders and newspapers with irrefutable logic placed the blame for the financial disaster on the conduct of Jackson. It was hard, for example, for the Democrats to meet such an argument as this:

> The friends of Mr. Van Buren may say what they please, but it was the attack which they—the self-styled Democratic Republican Party—made upon the United States Bank, which brought the country to this wretched situation. What nation ever had a better currency than we, when the Bank was in full operation? What notes were in better repute? Where could you find any which had a more general—more universal circulation? So soon as it received the wound which was aimed at it, by the administration, this universal confidence was withdrawn. There was no Bank which could be trusted by foreign nations. There was none for whose drafts they would give a farthing. How then could the merchants of this country, pay their debts to those of England? Would they take bills on the United States Bank? NO—because its own Government had pronounced sentence on it, and it must fall. Would they accept a draft on any of the State Banks? No one ever anticipated such confidence in them. We are then reduced to the necessity of sending the specie from this country, for payment of our debts. The process is as natural as any that can be conceived. This has been, and ever will be the result. Have we forgotten, that for months past, ship after ship has been leaving our shores, laden with specie?
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> Would this have been, had not the administration destroyed the confidence of foreign nations, in the best bank that ever was in the country? We know not, how it may appear to those who have allowed their prejudices to dethrone their reason; but to us, the proposition is as simple as any in political economy, that any nation whose currency is tampered with, will be in distress. And was there ever such ignorance exhibited by the rulers of any Government, on the subject of finance?[23]

To this argument the *Standard* replied that the blame was not with the Democratic administration but with the moneyed class led by the Biddle Whigs who had brought the country to the verge of ruin by overspeculation and overtrading.[24] During 1837 and 1838, the *Standard* ran a series of editorials on the issue, but used the denunciatory approach almost entirely in supporting its contentions. Biddle was the "heartless Shylock," the "arch-enemy of the people," and "the money devil." The title of a typical article on Biddle reads, "The Bank and Mr. Biddle against the People and the Constitution."[25]

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[23] *Raleigh Register,* August 28, 1837.

[24] *Standard,* May to September, 1837.

With the introduction of the Independent Treasury bill in Congress in 1838 the North Carolina Democrats were given a more tangible basis for an aggressive fight. The opportunity was not used as extensively, however, as certain Whig leaders had feared it would be. Charles Shepard, a Whig congressman, wrote his friend, John H. Bryan, that Calhoun was the one who divided the Whigs on the Independent Treasury bill and that unless the Whigs of North Carolina exerted themselves their party would again be thrown into a minority.[26] When the vote on the Independent Treasury bill was taken in Congress, the North Carolina delegation was divided on a strict party basis, all the Democrats favoring the measure and all the Whigs opposing it. When it was known that the bill had failed to pass there was great celebration among the Whigs in Raleigh. The *Register* issued an "extra," a parade was formed, and the national flag was hoisted over the capitol. The *Standard* bore patiently all the Whig taunts except the use made of the national emblem as a part of the celebration of party triumph. Regarding this act the Democratic journal asked: "We should like to know by what right the Federalists of Raleigh appropriate the capitol to party triumphs—what right the commissioners have to permit a flag to be hoisted on this Temple of Liberty, the property of the whole state, to gratify the senseless whims and ridiculous vagaries of a hand full of Federalists of this city?"[27]

Of course the defeat of 1838 in no wise settled the bank issue in the state. Each party meeting and political campaign brought further emphasis upon the issue. In 1839 the Democratic State Rights Convention gave special attention to the advocacy of the idea of an independent treasury as the only constitutional adjustment of the financial policy of the national government.[28] In June of the same year the *Standard* announced that the Democratic administration had saved the country from the disaster of the National Bank and had placed the country on a sound financial basis, giving a constitutional, metallic currency instead of "bloated paper." The success of the Subtreasury bill in 1840 added to the Democratic confidence and caused the Whigs to be a little more cautious on the issue of the national bank in view of the impending presidential election. George E. Badger, a Whig leader, showed a disposition to avoid having Harrison appear as an advocate of the bank. He stated that Harrison was not advocating a national bank, that his opinions were against it, and that he would be in favor of such an institution "only if public interest should demand" it.[29] The Democrats took Badger's statement to be hypocrisy. In the fifteenth electoral district an address was issued which stated that "the true and fair issue is between a National Bank and the independent treasury."[30]

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[25] *Standard,* July 4, 1838.

[26] Charles Shepard to John H. Bryan, March 6, 1838, John H. Bryan Papers, Vol. IV (1830-40).

[27] *Standard,* July 4, 1838.

The Whigs having repealed the Sub-treasury bill in 1841, the issue was thrown into North Carolina politics in the state elections of 1842 with renewed vigor. The Democratic candidate for governor, Louis D. Henry, expressed himself "very severely" upon banks. The *Raleigh Register* accused him of inconsistency in view of the fact that he had once applied for the position of attorney for the branch bank of the United States in Fayetteville and had also shown a favorable attitude toward banks while he was a member of the General Assembly in 1831, the latter accusation being based on Henry's vote not to postpone a bill for the establishment of two banks.[31]

One fatal fault of Democratic leadership in North Carolina was division of opinion on important issues. Such a division appeared in the General Assembly of 1842. In the Senate, Bedford Brown and James B. Shepard were taking leadership among the Democrats in the "war on banks." Unfortunately these men could not come to an agreement on the matter. Shepard introduced a bill providing for the issuance of one million dollars in treasury notes to relieve the stringent financial condition of the state. Senator Brown opposed the bill on the ground that it was unconstitutional and inexpedient. Brown insisted that the Democratic party was a hard-money party and that it would be folly to attempt to cure the disease of the body politic by adopting as a remedy the very evil that had produced the financial disaster facing the country. In answering the latter argument Shepard denied that the Democratic party was a hard-money party, stating that the party was not adverse to sound paper currency.[32] Shortly after the introduction of the Shepard bill, Brown introduced a bill to prevent suspension of specie payment by the banks of North Carolina. This bill provided that in case any bank in the state suspended specie payment for a total of thirty days in any one year the bank should thereby forfeit its charter and must be closed by the sheriff of the county in which the bank was located. Neither the bill introduced by Shepard nor the one introduced by Brown secured the requisite votes for passage.

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[28] *Address of the Democratic State Rights Convention,* May 4, 1839. (A pamphlet.)

[29] George E. Badger, *Speech Delivered at the Great Whig Meeting in the County of Granville, on Tuesday the Third Day of March, 1840.* (A pamphlet.)

[30] *An Address to the Citizens of the Fifteenth Electoral District.* (An anonymous pamphlet.)

[31] *Raleigh Register,* February 18, 1842.

The Democrats in the General Assembly of 1842-43 made at least one other serious mistake in agitating the bank issue. A resolution was introduced and supported by the party calling for the selection of a joint committee with full power to make a rigid investigation of the affairs of the banks. After the resolutions had passed both the Senate and the House of Commons it seems to have dawned on some of the Democratic leaders that if the investigation failed to prove the banks corrupt the arguments of the party against the institutions would be seriously discredited, and so, on the day following the passage of the resolutions by the House of Commons, a prominent Democrat moved a reconsideration of the measure. The Whigs interpreted the move as an attempt "to take back-track" and opened fire on the

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[32] *Raleigh Register,* December 20, 1842.

Democrats on that score. A characteristic legislative battle followed, but in the end reconsideration prevailed by an almost strictly party vote.[33] The whole procedure tended to discredit the attitude of the Democrats toward banks.

As a better understanding of the use of banking institutions developed, there was a decided shifting of attitudes on the bank issue in the ranks of the Democratic party. The *Raleigh Register* stated that the number of Democrats declaring their conviction that the United States Bank was a necessity was becoming large enough to be common knowledge. The *Register* was always inclined to exaggerate, and the number was not so large as that paper would have had the public believe, but there is no doubt of a change of conviction among many Democrats on the matter of banks. In 1840 William H. Haywood, Jr., wrote Martin Van Buren an explanation of the Democratic defeat in the state elections of that year, making the following statement:

> . . . It is the office of a true friend to speak the truth in plainness to those who administer our affairs and I am free to say that all the Federal arts would have failed if the people of this State were not in favor of a *National Bank*. . . . I think he is much deceived who cannot see that a majority in North Carolina are ready to go for no one who is pledged to oppose the Great Regulator—Against my will I am convinced of all this.[34]

In the matter of state banks there was a more apparent growing tolerance among the Democrats. An evidence of this may be found in resolutions appearing in the *Standard* in 1843. These resolutions stated that the Democratic party had been misrepresented in the matter of state banks; that it was not opposed to "properly regulated state institutions based upon a specie capital"; and further, that the Democratic party did not advocate an exclusively metallic currency, but only insisted upon strict governmental regulation of the redemption of notes.[35]

The climax of the bank issue, as it developed in the state through 1843, came when Thomas Loring, editor of the *Stand-*

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[33] *Raleigh Register,* January 3, 1843.

[34] William H. Haywood, Jr., to Martin Van Buren, August 5, 1840, North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

[35] *Standard,* December 20, 1843.

ard, became involved in a controversy with a number of leaders of the Democratic party over the issue. In 1842 Loring gave evidences of having developed a special interest in money matters. He began to publish in the *Standard* weekly reports of the money market and no longer appeared enthusiastically opposed to banking institutions. In fact editorials began to appear supporting the interests of state banks. The *Register*, noticing this new interest manifested by the *Standard*, commented that although "the *Standard* has been greatly instrumental in producing this anti-Bank mania which now pervades the Loco Foco ranks, yet its recent course shows a disposition to repair any injury it may have aided to inflict." Loring hastened to answer that "the Editor of the *Register* will find that he has done the *Editor* of the *Standard* great injustice . . . *the Editor of the Standard has uniformly expressed the same views*" on the matter.[36] The crisis came when Gaston H. Wilder arose in the General Assembly and proceeded to read Loring out of the Democratic party. Wilder had the support of a good many of the Democratic members, especially the young men who resented Loring's leadership and his late expressions of apostasy. Wilder's accusation against Loring was that the editor had sold out to the Bank of the State, having been influenced by the fact that the institution had advanced him a loan of thirteen hundred dollars. Loring met Wilder's attack in a most caustic manner; in fact he was so bitter against Wilder and his colleagues that many who might have been out of sympathy with the young men were turned against the editor by his cutting condemnation of his enemies. After ridiculing the men who had read him out of the party, Loring launched into a full and frank statement of his attitude on the bank issue. The following brief extract from the statement will suffice to indicate a summary of his attitude:

> In regard to the Bank: There are different opinions entertained on various points by men of both parties. Some are for having no banks at all. With these we have never agreed in opinion. We contend that the business habits of the age cannot be divested of the facilities afforded by banking institutions. . . . We believe that specie-paying banks ought to be sustained

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[36] *Standard*, January 18, 1843.

in all their lawful operations, by the approving voice of the people and the government; especially those in whose business the *government may be a partner.* We have insisted that the banks should redeem their notes in specie, when demanded—as we are opposed to an irredeemable currency in any and every shape.[37]

Loring's attitude was certainly sane and sound; but he was dealing with politicians, and because he had been too honest and too frank on a subject that stirred suspicion and prejudice, his position in the party was doomed. His career as a Democratic editor, as will be seen in another connection, was at an end. But the North Carolina politicians were not done with the bank issue.

PUBLIC LANDS

Passing now to a consideration of the problem of the public lands, it is of interest to know that by 1835 both parties in the state had assumed definite and different attitudes on this important question. A suggestion of these attitudes may be obtained by examining two sets of resolutions that were introduced in the General Assembly of 1835-36. Early in the session resolutions representing the Whig attitude were introduced by Thomas L. Clingman of Buncombe County. These resolutions declared that it would be unjust and injurious to the older states of the union for Congress to give public land to the states in which they were situated, or to reduce the price of public lands below the minimum of that time; and further, that, since the purpose of the *session* had been fulfilled by the extinction of the public debt, the net receipts from the sale of lands should be distributed among the states in some proportionate manner, such as on the basis of the federal ratio.[38] In opposition to Clingman's resolutions, which were tabled, a series of resolutions representing to some extent the Democratic view were introduced by Harrison M. Waugh, a Democrat of Surry County. Waugh's resolutions agreed with the Clingman resolutions that it would be a breach of public faith for Congress to give the public lands to the states in which they were situated, and then set forth in a

[37] *Standard,* January 11, 1843.

[38] *Raleigh Star,* June 30, 1836.

clear statement the main principle of the Democrats on the issue. This portion of the resolutions stated:

> Whenever the proceeds of the sales of the territory or public lands of the United States are not required in the aid of other revenues, for the legitimate purpose of the National Government, it will be the first duty of Congress to diminish the public taxes imposed upon the people of the United States and thereby reduce the revenue to a sum which, when added to the land sales, will not exceed the actual wants of the government.[39]

But it was not Waugh's desire merely to make a statement of the party attitude on the matter. He sought so to frame his resolutions as to make them agreeable to both Democrats and Whigs. So the resolutions continued with the statement that in view of the danger to national stability in distributing the system of national revenues at that time, it was believed to be the duty of Congress to devise some safe method of distributing the surplus proceeds from public land among the states without showing preference to the new states. The resolutions closed with a declaration deprecating the attitude of persons who attempted to make the problem of public lands a party issue. Of course the resolutions were satisfactory to neither Democrats nor Whigs.

David S. Reid, a leading Democrat from Rockingham County, moved that the resolutions be indefinitely postponed, stating that the land question was not an issue to be agitated in the state legislature but rather a matter of concern for the national government. Waugh replied in a speech of much fervor. He stated that the opposition to President Jackson had seized upon his resolutions "to lash public feeling into excitement." He charged the Whigs with having dealt falsely with the people in accusing the Democrats of not favoring a policy that would bring to the older states benefits from the sales of public lands. He expressed the desire that his resolutions be accepted free from any impress of party. But such a course was not entirely possible, for while the Senate gave a unanimous approval of the Waugh resolutions, they were killed in the

[39] *Standard,* March 17, 1836.

House "by party rancor," to use the expression of the *Standard*. This paper concluded a review of the matter with the statement: "Let the blood of this victim to partisan rancor stain the hands of every Whig who was in the House when the deed was done!"[40] While the *Standard* favored the resolutions, the Whig press of Raleigh opposed them with considerable bitterness. The *Star* in reviewing the matter stated:

> The partisans of Van Buren . . . satisfied that open opposition to the assertion of our rights to a part of the proceeds of the public domain would expose them to the anger of a betrayed people concluded a string of wishy-washy resolutions which were introduced by Mr. Waugh of Surry. A more deceptive, jesuitical and barefaced attempt to gull the people was never attempted. The leaders had discovered, from the temper of the people, who had been aroused on this subject, that they must make a show of asserting the rights of the State, and brought forth, after great travail this wonderful production, of which Mr. Waugh was to pass as the father. The artifice was partially successful. The resolutions of Mr. Clingman were defeated.[41]

The legislative battle introduced the issue of distribution as an important party test for the future. After 1835 the Democratic attitude crystallized into opposition to distribution, while the Whigs favored the policy.

When the issue came before Congress, the delegation from North Carolina divided in the characteristic party manner. The course of Senators Strange and Brown was subject to special criticism by the Whig papers of the state. The criticism was especially vehement when the senators voted for a measure depriving the states of their share of the surplus revenue that was to fall due in October, 1837.

Resolutions were passed by the General Assembly of 1840-41 requesting the North Carolina delegation to use its influence for the passage of a bill that would direct the proceeds of the sale of public land. The measure passed because the Whigs were in the majority, but the Democrats had some consolation in forcing their adversaries to "sidestep" the doctrine of instruction in a rather inconsistent manner.

[40] *Standard*. March 17, 1836.

[41] *Raleigh Star*, June 2, 1836.

THE TARIFF

Closely allied with the distribution issue was the tariff issue. As has already been stated, the Democrats favored the use of the funds that had been derived from the sale of public lands for expenses of the national government in order that the tariff might be reduced. In 1836 Weldon N. Edwards, a Democratic member of the General Assembly from Warren County, expressed what was considered by many as the true Democratic doctrine on the tariff. He introduced resolutions in the legislature requesting that the United States senators from North Carolina be instructed, and the representatives requested, to "use their endeavors to effect such a modification of the existing tariff duties as will bring down the revenue from imports to the wants of the Government, economically administered, having due regard to all the great interests of the Country."[42] The doctrine of economy, so much emphasized by North Carolina Democrats, gave room for eloquent utterances in opposition to a protective tariff. Congressman Charles Fisher, addressing his constituency in 1840, stated that "of all the political curses that have ever been inflicted on this Country since we became a free people, the *protective tariff* has been the greatest." Fisher continued his address by stating that the protective tariff had been largely responsible for the political evils experienced by the American people during his time. The bringing into existence of many of the banks, the excesses that brought ruin to them, the financial destruction of thousands of people, the aggression of northern manufacturers, the hardships of the southern farmers and mechanics, the high taxation of the many to benefit the few—all these evils, according to Fisher, had come upon the American people because of a protective tariff.[43] But Fisher's statement must not be interpreted as indicating that the Democrats were opposed to a tariff for revenue. A number of the Democratic leaders made it clear that they in no wise opposed tariff for revenue only—it was a tariff that gave protection to one section of the country and not to another, to one industry to the neglect of another, that they opposed.

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[42] *Standard,* November 30, 1836.

[43] *To the Freemen of the Counties of Rowan, Davie, Davidson, Randolph, and Chatham.* (A pamphlet, 1840.)

As the presidential election of 1840 approached, and it became more or less certain that Van Buren and Harrison would be the candidates, their opinions and actions on the tariff issue came to be a matter of considerable concern in North Carolina. The Whigs began in 1838 a series of attacks on Van Buren, attempting to prove him inconsistent on the issue. He was accused of having been a high tariff advocate both as a member of the New York state legislature and as a member of Congress. The Democrats gave some attention to a defense of Van Buren; but most of their efforts were directed against Harrison, pointing him out as a dangerous man on the issue. Some assistance came from leaders from outside of North Carolina. For example, Levi Woodbury wrote Bedford Brown in 1840: "We do not despair of North Carolina. . . . They cannot abandon all their long tried principles of democracy by voting in favor of the high tariff."[44]

The issue continued to be agitated in North Carolina after the presidential election. Unusual interest was excited, during the meeting of the General Assembly of 1842-43, by the resolutions of instruction introduced by the Democrats who desired to instruct the United States senators on the tariff and other matters. With the passage of the tariff act of 1843 the agitation in the state was renewed. The *Raleigh Register* made a review of the tariff bills of 1816, 1828, and 1842, citing Democratic votes and expressions of Democratic leaders in such a way as to indicate inconsistency among the Democrats on the tariff issue.[45] In spite of this the Democrats gave no indication of being affected or convinced. They repeated their arguments and continued their usual emphasis on the protective tariff as a measure unfair to the South.

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[44] Levi Woodbury to Bedford Brown, September 11, 1840, "Selections from the Correspondence of Bedford Brown," *Trinity College Historical Papers,* Series VI (1906).

[45] *Raleigh Register,* December 22, 1843.

ABOLITION AGITATION

No issue excited more bitterness or created more unnecessary misunderstandings than the abolition issue as it was presented in North Carolina politics. That neither the Whig nor the Democratic party in the state was abolitionist is self-evident. Yet each party, at the least provocation, attempted to prove the other party to be abolitionist in sentiments and leadership. About the only abolition element in the state was the Quakers, who were found chiefly in Guilford County. These people were, on the whole, in sympathy with the Whig party, a fact which gave the Democrats the only joy that they ever manifested over the presence of a Whig element in the state. The Yearly Meeting of the Quakers on several occasions took steps toward agitating the slavery issue that brought the Whigs some embarrassment. On one such occasion a petition was sent to the General Assembly requesting that measures be taken looking toward the abolition of slavery. It fell to the lot of John M. Morehead, a prominent Whig, to present the petition. The Democrats did not lose the opportunity to condemn Morehead and the Whigs as agents of the abolitionists. But the Whigs were not to be outdone. The *Raleigh Register* sought and found similar guilt within the Democratic ranks. Judge Romulus M. Saunders, a Democrat of considerable influence, had presented an abolitionist memorial to Congress in 1824.[46]

This practice of making accusations only to be met with counter accusations of a similar nature came to be a sort of game between the Democrats and the Whigs. Especially do we find much activity of this sort during the presidential campaigns of 1836 and 1840. The Democrats accused Clay and Harrison of being abolitionists, and the Whigs attempted to prove that Van Buren was in full sympathy with the same movement. Because Van Buren was a northern man there was manifested some uneasiness among the Democrats regarding his "soundness" on the issue. To settle once for all the disputes on the matter, a group of Democrats of Jackson County under the leadership of Junius Amis wrote Van Buren in 1836 putting the following question to him: "Do you, or do you not believe that Congress has the Constitutional power to interfere with or to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia?"[47] Van Buren made a careful answer to the question. He first expressed his conviction that Congress had no right to interfere in any manner, or to any extent, with slavery in the states. He then stated that he was against any attempt of Congress to interfere with slavery in the District of Columbia. He admitted that Congress had the theoretical right under the Constitution to regulate slavery in the District of Columbia, but hastened to add that it was his belief that the right should not be used and pledged himself to oppose any attempt to do so.[48]

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[46] *Raleigh Register,* January 31, 1840.

An interesting Whig response to this letter is found in a letter written by John Chavis, a free Negro, to Willie P. Mangum shortly after the Van Buren letter had been printed in the *Standard*. Chavis writes:

> Although I have ever been opposed to Mr. Van Buren, I never would suffer myself to believe he was an abolitionist until I saw his elaborate reply to Mr. Amis and others, and now I believe it to be an electioneering trick from the beginning to the end and will in all probability, have its desired effect with many and he is now standing behind the curtain, as a radical abolitionist looking on and laughing in his sleeves. Why don't he come boldly up to the subject and speak out like a man who loves his country, men, women and children? No he is for the loaves and fishes.[49]

During the presidential campaign of 1840 another letter was addressed to Van Buren by North Carolina Democrats. At a meeting of Democrats in Rockingham, Richmond County, a number of resolutions were passed including the following question addressed to both Van Buren and Harrison, but directed especially to Van Buren: "Are you or are you not opposed to the abolition of slavery in the United States, in any and every shape, form or fashion, except as the owners of the slaves may themselves desire?" This question was followed by these resolutions:

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[47] Martin Van Buren to J. Amis and Others, March 4, 1836, North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] John Chavis to Willie P. Mangum, April 4, 1836, Willie P. Mangum Papers, 1835-39.

> *Resolved*, That although we have no cause to suspect either an union of sentiment, or of action, between the abolitionist and Martin Van Buren; yet we are firmly persuaded that the highly excited and sensitive condition of the public mind at the South, requires at his hand, a renewal of the same sentiments and pledges, as were contained, in his letter of the 6th of March 1836, addressed to Junius Amis and others.
>
> *Resolved*, That as Southern citizens and Southern Democrats we cannot, or will not support any man for the Presidency, who does not give the South satisfactory assurances, that he is opposed to the wild and mischievous movements of the abolitionists.

In sending these resolutions to Van Buren, Walter F. Leak, who acted for the convention, assured the President that the object of the question was in no wise an indication of suspicion on the part of the Democrats as to his integrity on the abolition issue. He explained that the questions had been propounded "to remove every vestige of doubt, arising from lapse of time" as to Van Buren's sentiments on the issue.[50]

In answering the resolutions Van Buren explained that he not only retained his former sentiments on slavery, but that his conviction on the matter had been strengthened by "subsequent experience and reflection."[51] But Van Buren's letter did not seem satisfactory to some. On May 4, 1840, J. R. Steele addressed a letter to him stating that the letter to Leak had left many still unsatisfied regarding his views. He requested Van Buren to answer this question: "Do you hold that Congress has the constitutional power, to impose restrictions upon States applying for admission into the Union, as to slavery in particular?" Steele was not a Democrat but a Whig who objected to Harrison's noncommittal attitude on the abolition issue and was considering Van Buren as possibly the lesser of the two evils. Leak wrote Van Buren assuring him that Steele was not attempting to embarrass him but was really seeking information.

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[50] W. F. Leak to Martin Van Buren, March 21, 1840, North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

[51] Martin Van Buren to W. F. Leak, March 27, 1840, *ibid.*

On receiving this assurance, Van Buren framed a reply to Steele's query. It seemed to be one of the most labored of Van Buren's attempts at expression on this vexing issue. His letter of reply was rewritten at least three times and displays an unusual amount of erasing and altering. His final draft stated that he would not give his "Constitutional sanction" to a bill for admission of a state in which the state was required by Congress to restrict slavery.[52]

In spite of all his statements, North Carolinians were never done with Van Buren's alleged "unsoundness" on the slavery question. The Whig papers continually condemned him, the Democratic papers defended him, and everyone seemed to doubt him. When Lieutenant Hooe was tried and dismissed from the United States Navy, Van Buren was bitterly condemned by the Whig press in North Carolina for permitting Negro testimony to be brought into the case. The *Raleigh Register* stated that this gave evidence to the fact that Van Buren considered a Negro as good as a white man in the witness-box.[53]

One point is clear in all this agitation between parties in North Carolina on the slavery and abolition issue: both of the parties were defending the institution of slavery and each attempted to cast odium on the other by attributing abolitionist sentiments and attachments to the rival party. It might be added that neither party took the other very seriously in the matter, both recognizing that to a large extent the issue was a feigned one as far as North Carolina was concerned.

Indications of the rising feeling of national sectionalism were brought forward in the abolitionist controversy, as it centered around Van Buren, in North Carolina. Governor Dudley sounded the keynote for the Whigs in this matter when, in his speech of acceptance on being nominated by his party for governor in 1836, he stated that Van Buren was "not one of us. He is a Northern man in soul, in principle, and in action, with no one feeling of sympathy or interest for the South."[54] Dudley's statement was attacked by the *Standard* and by Senator Bedford Brown.[55] Yet there is little doubt regarding the fact that there was enough provincialism among the Democrats of the state to cause the accusation to do injury to a candidate already accepted by the party with labored enthusiasm or indifferent resignation. A more positive attack on the sectional issue was made by the Democrats when the Whigs avowed their support of Hugh L. White of Tennessee for president on the grounds that he was a southern candidate. One of the strongest condemnations of sectionalism in politics ever appearing in North Carolina was included in the *Address to the Freemen of North Carolina* issued by the Democratic Central Committee in 1836. The attitude can best be shown in this quotation from the address:

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[52] Martin Van Buren to J. R. Steele, August 6, 7, 18, 1840, North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

[53] *Raleigh Register,* June 23, 1840.

[54] *Standard,* March 3, 1836.

> The Nullifiers who arrogate to their party an exclusive defense of *States Rights,* and the sole guardianship of *Southern* principles have adopted Judge White as their candidate. And the leaders among Judge White's friends are endeavoring to organize a *Sectional Southern Party* for his support. . . . We believe that these things are pregnant with imminent peril to the *Union* and however honest and patriotic may be the motives of the individuals concerned in maturing them, their tendency is as fatal to the preservation of the UNION as if their design had been criminal. In the name of liberty, then we invoke all reflecting Union men of every party to pause![56]

It is a safe conclusion that, while such an appeal had some influence, sectionalism and abolitionism were coming to be closely allied and that sectionalism was greatly to influence both parties.

In addition to the issues of state and national significance, there were issues involving the personalities and activities of candidates and party leaders. Such issues can best be studied in connection with the campaigns and elections, a study that requires a separate chapter.

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[55] *Standard,* September 15, 1836.

[56] William H. Haywood, Jr., and others. *An Address to the Freemen of North Carolina,* pp. 6-7. (A pamphlet.)

CHAPTER V

CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS, 1835-1843

If we accept frequency of elections as a criterion in evaluating an essential feature of democratic government, then there is no doubt regarding the democracy of this phase of the government of North Carolina before 1860. Each year brought at least one campaign and election, with its accompanying candidates and issues. While the Convention of 1835 changed the election of the governor and members of the legislature from an annual to a biennial basis, these elections came alternately with the congressional elections, thus giving an annual election of interest to the entire state. In addition to these elections there was the quadrennial presidential election. To the list might also be added the election of United States senators, for, though the selection of the senators was a duty of the General Assembly, it was an election of state-wide interest and often had an influence on the election of the members of the General Assembly.

Congressional Campaigns and Elections, 1835-1843

National elections dominated the politics of North Carolina. Perhaps, therefore, the best index to the strength of the political parties of the state is found in the results of the congressional elections. The period from 1835 through 1843 was marked by defeats for the Democratic party, and the beginning of these defeats was foreshadowed by the congressional election of 1835. Six Democrats and seven Whigs were elected in the congressional election of that year. The Democratic congressmen were: Jesse A. Bynum, of Halifax; Henry W. Connor, of Catawba; M. T. Hawkins, of Warren; James I. McKay, of Bladen; Jesse Speight, of Greene; and William Montgomery, of Orange. Each of these men, with the exception of William Montgomery, who succeeded Daniel L. Barringer, had served in the previous Congress. In previous elections Barringer had been classed as a Democrat, but in the campaign of

1835 he was accused of being with those who killed the Appropriation Bill of 1834, and this accusation was deemed sufficient ground to declare that he had gone over to the enemy.[1]

The following brief analysis of the election written by Romulus M. Saunders to Martin Van Buren is of interest:

> For Congress we have lost Dr. Hall and gained Dr. Montgomery. Pettigrew is a gentleman—Barringer is a mischievous rascal—so in the end we have gained. One or both of the Shepards might have been beaten—Graham has beaten General Newland by only 18 votes—this was owing to a third candidate who said he was not satisfied with Newland and declared himself for you—he received in his county 200 only and this defeated Newland—they stand 6 for 7 against us.[2]

The contest between Graham and Newland was not settled by the election. Each aspirant claimed that illegal votes had been cast for his opponent. When Congress convened the election was contested by Newland. According to the sheriff's return, James Graham, the Whig candidate, received 3,733 votes and David Newland, the Democratic candidate, received 3,726. The congressional committee investigating the matter decided by a majority but not unanimous vote that nineteen of the votes cast for Graham were illegal on account of the voters' not being residents of the county or state in which they voted. The committee, for a like reason, decided that eight votes cast for Newland were illegal. A further decision of the committee added certain votes that had been struck from the poll by a judge in Asheville. By these decisions the majority of the committee reported Newland elected by thirteen votes.[3] The House by a vote of 114 to 87 declared Graham's seat vacant, but by a vote of 100 to 99 refused to seat Newland. Hence the matter was referred back to the people.[4] The North Carolina delegation voted on a strict party basis on the resolution declaring Graham's seat vacant, but on the resolution declaring Newland elected, two North Carolina Democrats, Connor and McKay, voted with the Whigs. If these men had voted with their party Newland would have been seated. The *Standard* expressed disappointment and intimated that Connor and McKay had not used good judgment, for, according to the reasoning of the Democratic organ, there was no issue of a tie and therefore if Graham was not elected, Newland was elected.[5]

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[1] *Standard,* August 6, 1835.

[2] R. M. Saunders to Martin Van Buren, August 25, 1835, North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

[3] *Standard,* March 17, 1836.

[4] *Ibid.,* April 7, 1836.

Governor Spaight did not order a special election in the twelfth district, but deferred the matter until the next regular elections in the state. He explained that Congress was nearly ready to adjourn and the expense of a separate election was not justifiable in view of the nearness of the next state elections. Notwithstanding this explanation, the Whigs accused the Governor of deliberately attempting to prevent Graham's reëlection in order to deprive the Whigs of a vote on important measures pending in Congress. When Clay's land bill failed by one vote the Whigs were especially bitter against Governor Spaight, stating that the measure failed because of the refusal of the Governor to call an election that would have meant success for the Whigs.[6]

In the congressional election of 1837 the Democrats lost further to the Whigs, only five of the party being returned. The change came in the fourth congressional district. Jesse Speight, the Democratic representative of this district, was not a candidate to succeed himself, and Charles Shepard, a Whig, was elected over the Democratic candidate, William D. Moseley, to take Speight's place.[7] No other changes were made in the Democratic representation in 1837. In two districts, the fifth and the eleventh, Democrats were elected without opposition, and in two other districts, the twelfth and the thirteenth, Whigs were elected without Democratic opposition.[8]

The political situation was becoming critical for the Democrats. In spite of alibis, it could not be denied that the party was losing supporters. No special effort had been put forth by the Democrats in the campaigns of 1835 and 1837, but as the campaign of 1839 approached they manifested a determination to do more than furnish lame explanations of defeat. In ten of the congressional districts "Committees of Vigilance" were appointed, some of which did good work. The Democratic newspapers gave more attention to the campaign than they had given to the previous campaign, and the contest developed into one of much interest and considerable bitterness. The votes of the Whig congressmen were studied with a view to providing material to be used against them. Both parties indulged so freely in personalities that in one case it was deemed necessary to call for one of those settlements which terminated "in a manner satisfactory and highly creditable to both parties," as the code of "honor" then required it to be stated.[9] The Democrats were rewarded for their vigor, the election resulting in success to eight Democratic candidates. The Democrats who had served in the twenty-fifth Congress were reëlected. In addition, two other Democrats, John Hill and Charles Fisher, were elected and Charles Shepard, who had been a Whig but had joined the Democratic ranks in 1838, was triumphantly reëlected over Whig opposition. One other Whig, S. T. Sawyer, deserted his party while in the twenty-fifth Congress, but he was defeated by Kenneth Rayner, one of the strongest of the Whig politicians.

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[5] *Standard,* April 14, 1836.

[6] *Ibid.,* July 28, 1836.

[7] *Raleigh Star,* August 30, 1837.

[8] *Ibid.*

The Democratic majority in the congressional delegation of North Carolina did not last long. As the time for the election of 1841 drew near the party faced several unfortunate circumstances. One misfortune came in the financial crisis brought by the suspension of specie payments by the North Carolina banks, which did much to discredit the national financial policy of the Democrats. Another disadvantage faced by the party was the fact that of the Democratic delegation serving in the twenty-sixth Congress, only McKay and Hawkins stood for reëlection. Of the number who did not seek reëlection, Jesse A. Bynum and Henry W. Connor were conspicuous. Bynum had acceptably served in Congress for four terms, and Connor was retiring after ten consecutive terms of service. Both of these men were succeeded by Democrats,

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[9] *Standard,* November 27, 1839.

Green W. Caldwell taking the place of Connor and J. R. J. Daniel being elected in Bynum's district. Other Democrats elected in 1841 were James I. McKay, Archibald H. Arrington, and Romulus M. Saunders. Anderson Mitchell was added to the list in 1842, having been elected to fill a vacancy made by the death of Lewis Williams, a Whig who was serving his fourteenth term in Congress. It will be noted that McKay was the only member of the Democratic delegation in the twenty-sixth Congress who was returned to the twenty-seventh Congress. It scarcely need be added that the results of the elections of 1841 were, on the whole, a disappointment to the Democrats.

Before the congressional elections of 1843 the state had been redistricted by the General Assembly of 1842-43. Under the new apportionment North Carolina lost four representatives, bringing the number down to nine. The Democrats controlled the legislature that did the redistricting, and there is evidence that some gerrymandering took place in the new arrangement of the congressional districts. The following complaint taken from the *Greensborough Patriot* will suffice to illustrate the objection of the Whigs in this matter:

> The 'Democracy' in the 4th District—our Congressional District, under the new arrangement, consists of Richmond, Anson, Montgomery, Stanly, Davidson, Randolph and Guilford—all thoroughly Whig counties. Taking the votes of even the last Governor's election which did not fully exhibit the Whig strength, we find the counties of this District giving 6,745 Whig votes and only 1,840 Locofoco votes, showing a Whig majority of nearly five thousand. The Whig majorities of these counties, no one has the hardihood to deny, were thrown together for the express purpose of preventing their due weight from being felt in the National legislature. These majorities would, under apportionment, have secured two Whigs to Congress, whereas they can now elect only one. The councils which thus stifle the voice of the people, would, if they dare, advise the disfranchisement of every free man who holds opinions differing from their own. They are tyrants and cowards (for tyrants and cowards generally go together) who take advantage of their adventitious power to inflict injury upon the rights of others.[10]

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[10] Quoted in the *Raleigh Register*, March 3, 1843.

It must be observed, however, if the Democrats had resorted to gerrymandering in the fourth district they had not appeared to do so on the map, for the new district was compact and not irregular in geographical arrangement.

More than usual interest attended the congressional campaign of 1843. In several of the districts joint debates were conducted by the candidates. The debates between Henry W. Miller and Romulus M. Saunders of the fifth district were of special interest, being followed by the voters of that district with some show of enthusiasm. The candidates debated national issues, and took considerable liberty in dealing with personalities. The campaign in the eighth congressional district was made conspicuous by the refusal of the Democratic candidate, Arrington, to meet Stanly, the Whig candidate, in joint debate after the two had met two or three times at the opening of the campaign.[11] No doubt Arrington acted wisely in refusing to continue the campaign with his adversary, for Stanly, who could face "the unterrified Democracy of Nash County" and demand that they take notice that he faced them "unterrified," was a debater of considerable ability.[12]

The election of 1843 resulted in victory for five Democrats and four Whigs. The Democrats did not poll as large a vote as had been expected. The inclemency of the weather was offered as a reason for this, the *Standard* explaining that the Whigs "residing as they do in great numbers in and about the villages and precincts" were at a better advantage to cast a larger vote on an inclement day.[13] The Democrats elected were Archibald H. Arrington, J. R. J. Daniel, James I. McKay, Romulus M. Saunders, and David S. Reid, all of whom, with the exception of Reid, had served in the previous Congress.

The election of United States senators in North Carolina between 1835 and 1843 occasioned unusual interest and some animosity. The first of the elections of this period occurred in 1836. The circumstances bringing about this election were created by the practice of the General Assembly in adopting resolutions of instruction to the United States senators. In 1834 Senators Brown and Strange had received instructions to vote for the expunging resolutions offered by Senator Benton.[14] Senator Brown was a good Democrat and a friend of Jackson; he, therefore, had no difficulty in obeying the instructions of the General Assembly of North Carolina. But such was not the case with Senator Mangum. He had already joined with those destined to be Whig leaders; he, therefore, regarded the instructions as a party trick directed against him and gave notice in a speech before the Senate that he would not respect them. Such a course called forth much hostility between the Democrats and Whigs. David Outlaw, a spokesman for the Whigs, stated that the Democrats had three objects in view when they framed the resolutions—to remove Mangum from the United States Senate, to fill his place with some member of the Democratic party, and to strike a blow at the United States Senate through Judge Mangum.[15] Just how the latter object would be accomplished Outlaw did not attempt to explain. The Democrats attempted to confine the issue to the question of the right to instruct United States senators. James M. Hutchinson, a member of the House of Commons from Mecklenburg County, presented a typical Democratic argument on the matter in an address to his constituency wherein he justified his vote for instructing Mangum and Brown. The most important part of his statement was as follows:

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[11] *Fayetteville Observer,* July 12, 1843.

[12] *Standard,* August 9, 1843.

[13] *Ibid.,* August 9, 1843.

> I advocate the right of instruction, as the true Democratic doctrine. By our Bill of Rights, which is a part of the Constitution of the State, the people have a right to assemble together to consult for the common good, and to instruct their representatives, etc. Otherwise the wishes and sentiments of the people could not be carried into effect. . . . This right results from the very nature of our institutions. And it is not to be presumed that the Legislature of the State will exercise the power except upon *important* subjects, and with a knowledge of the public will.[16]

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[14] It will be remembered that Benton's resolutions proposed to expunge the resolutions of censure that had been passed against Jackson in 1834.

[15] Earl R. Franklin, "The Instruction of United States Senators," *Trinity College Historical Papers,* Series VII (1907).

[16] *Freemen of Mecklenburg.* (A circular issued January 22, 1835.)

The Whigs refused, on a theoretical basis, to accept the matter of instructing the senators on the expunging resolutions. The *Register* stated that "no political class believed more firmly" in the right of instruction than did the Whigs when instruction was "legitimately and constitutionally" used,[17] a statement that could scarcely be substantiated. But the opponents of the instructions of 1836 contended that the "expunging" instructions were not issued in a spirit of constitutional right, but rather as a political trick of the Democrats to force a Whig senator to resign.

Senator Mangum remained in the Senate until November 26, 1836, on which date he resigned. His resignation came as a result of the triumph of the Democratic party in North Carolina in the election of Democratic presidential electors. According to the accepted practices of the time, this act did not indicate an adherence to the doctrine of instruction, for Mangum was obeying the voice of the people at the polls, not the legislature, in his resignation.

On the resignation of Mangum, Robert Strange was elected to fill the unexpired term, and shortly thereafter was elected to serve for a full term. Strange was nominated in a party caucus which was not so harmonious a meeting as it might have been. In fact the first caucus held by the Democrats for the purpose of nominating a candidate was so divided that it was necessary to adjourn without making a nomination. The division came because of the rivalry between those supporting Haywood and those supporting Strange.[18] Strange had received the largest number of votes in the first caucus and a sufficient number in the second caucus to secure the nomination. When the vote was taken in the legislature, Strange was elected on almost a strict party vote.[19]

The Whigs were not long in retaliating in the matter of instructing United States senators. In 1837 they carried both houses of the legislature, and immediately thereafter the Whig newspapers began to demand the resignation of Brown and Strange. A number of Whig papers—including the *Carolina Watchman* of Salisbury, the *Oxford Examiner,* the *Washington Whig* and the *Raleigh Register*—insisted that Senators Brown and Strange should interpret the election to mean instruction. But no such interpretation was forthcoming. By the middle of the summer of 1838 it was generally known among the Democrats that the Whigs would instruct Brown and Strange to vote for a national bank. The Democrats attempted to build up a defense against the impending move of the Whigs. Long extracts from Senator Mangum's addresses wherein he had condemned the doctrine of instruction were published in the *Standard.* Other material which displayed a Whig opposition to the doctrine of instruction was published by the Democratic papers.

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[17] *Raleigh Register*, March 15, 1836. As the issue of instruction developed the *Register* reversed itself and expressed opposition to the doctrine. (See *Register*, March 10, 1843.)

[18] John C. Taylor to Willie P. Mangum, November 24, 1836, Willie P. Mangum Papers, 1835-39.

[19] *Ibid.*

When the General Assembly met, the Whigs lost no time in dealing out to the Democrats retaliation for the kind of treatment that had been meted out to them in the previous legislature, but in such a way as to avoid committing themselves to the doctrine of instructions. They decided in a caucus accordingly to instruct without using the word instruct.

Kenneth Rayner, a recognized Whig leader, introduced a series of resolutions which included the following: a condemnation of the passage of the "expunging resolutions," with a request that the action be rescinded by the United States Senate; a condemnation of the Sub-treasury scheme of the Democrats; and the advocacy of the policy of distribution. The resolutions concluded with a declaration that the senators in Congress would represent the wishes of a large majority of the people of the state of North Carolina by voting to carry out the foregoing resolutions. Recognizing the Whig majority in the General Assembly as a guarantee of the passage of the resolutions, the Democrats attempted to make the issue one that would commit the Whigs to the doctrine of instruction. This they attempted to do by suggesting that the resolutions be so amended that the word "instruct" should appear. The Whigs refused to be committed, however, and the resolutions were passed and forwarded to the senators. The general impression in Congress, especially among the Whigs, was that the senators would resign upon receiving the resolutions.[20] But the North Carolina senators refused to submit mildly. They addressed the General Assembly, asking if the resolutions meant instruction, declaring their adherence to the doctrine and willingness to resign in case the legislature indicated that the resolutions meant instruction. Still the Whigs in the General Assembly refused to commit themselves to a fundamental doctrine of the Democrats. The House of Commons made no reply to the request of the senators, and the State Senate passed a resolution declaring that the Rayner resolutions were "sufficiently plain and intelligible to be comprehended by anyone desirous of understanding them" and that "the inquiry as to the meaning of the resolutions was not in good faith and it would be inconsistent with the self-respect of the General Assembly to make any reply to the inquiry" of Senators Strange and Brown.[21]

Both senators addressed the United States Senate on the attitude that they had assumed on the Rayner resolutions in order to get their opinions before the people. Each stated that he did not consider the resolutions to be an instruction and therefore would not resign in the crisis. Both senators declared that they would submit the question to the people at the next election of members of the General Assembly. Senator Strange expressed his opinion on the hypocrisy of the resolutions in the following manner: "The omission of the word instruction was designed. And why? Because it was well known that a peculiar force and significance was attached to it, and an operation given to it which they did not approve, and therefore did not wish to sanction by its use."[22]

The newspapers took up the warfare over instructions with renewed vigor. The *Fayetteville Observer,* a Whig paper, declared that if the senators were sincere in the matter of adhering to the doctrine of instruction they would have resigned when the

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[20] William A. Graham to his wife, December 23, 1838, William A. Graham Papers, 1818-64.

[21] *Standard,* January 9, 1839.

[22] *Remarks of Mr. Brown and Mr. Strange on Presenting the North Carolina Resolutions in the Senate, Monday, January 14, 1839.* (A pamphlet.)

Whig legislature was elected. The *Standard* stated that the action of the senators had been "orthodox and republican."[23] This Democratic paper came to such a conclusion by the following process of reasoning:

> If the legislature instructs, it assumes the responsibility for all the consequences of the act, and absolves the Representative from everything but obedience. If the legislature will not assume the responsibility, but chooses to declare that the Senators are misrepresenting the people, the Senators may either disregard the declaration or repel the charge by submitting the question to the people themselves.[24]

In addition to newspaper opinions, an address to the people was issued by the Democratic members of the legislature. This address condemned the action of the Whigs in the Legislature, and supported the course taken by the United States senators in their refusal to accept the resolutions as instructions.

In compliance with their statement, Senator Strange and Senator Brown sent in their resignations on June 6th with the understanding that they would take effect with the meeting of the next General Assembly. This action made the Rayner resolutions an issue in the election of the General Assembly of 1839. The state election proved to be a victory for the Whigs. When the General Assembly met, Willie P. Mangum was placed in nomination by the Whigs for the long term. Of course the Democrats supported Brown for this place. In the election Brown received sixty-five votes and Mangum received ninety-nine. The Whigs nominated William A. Graham in opposition to Strange for the short term. Strange received sixty-five votes and Graham ninety-eight votes.[25]

The next election of United States senators in North Carolina occurred in 1842. It appeared that the Democrats would control matters as they chose, for the party had a majority in the General Assembly of that year. Unfortunately for the party, however, there were too many leaders eager to serve their country. Before the meeting of the General Assembly a large group of prospective candidates had been mentioned, including Bedford Brown, Romulus M. Saunders, Louis D. Henry, Charles Shepard, Robert Strange, Charles Fisher, and William H. Haywood, Jr. After the meeting of the General Assembly it was soon apparent that the contest would be between Bedford Brown and Romulus M. Saunders. A deadlock ensued in the Democratic caucus. Brown was anxious to have his course in 1839 endorsed. Saunders was ambitious. Of all the office seekers in North Carolina he was the most assiduous. "His letters were full of his desire for this office and that; for even while he was in office, he would devote much thought and anxiety to finding something better to try for."[26] Both men had their following, which was based on political as well as personal reasons. On national politics they differed chiefly in their choice of a presidential candidate for the election of 1844. Brown was closely attached to Van Buren, and Saunders favored the candidacy of Calhoun. The Whigs made more of this difference than it deserved, however, as North Carolina was not divided, to any appreciable extent, on presidential candidates in 1842.

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[23] *Standard*, June 26, 1839.

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] *Ibid.*, December 2, 1840.

On November 30th Brown sent his friend Duncan McRae to Saunders with a proposal that the two candidates withdraw from the race. This Saunders refused to do in spite of the fact that the vote cast for him had always been far below the vote cast for Brown. The *Standard* attempted to influence the matter by suggesting in its issue of December 14 that those supporting Saunders should go over to Brown in view of the fact that the last vote stood sixty-three Democrats for Brown and thirty-six Democrats for Saunders. In making this suggestion the *Standard* stated that Saunders had been its first choice and that the proposal had called for a "sacrifice of feeling to the good of the cause." The proposal tended only to infuriate Saunders, who afterwards bitterly assailed the *Standard* for the suggestion.[27] In fact, the whole course of Saunders in relation to the election was unbecoming. William A. Graham received a letter from a Whig friend regarding the matter, which stated Saunders' attitude in the following manner: "Brown out runs Saunders and Saunders 'tis said is violent and cunning, but holds on, much to our special satisfaction. He has said if *caucused out,* he can *go out*, and if his party can do without him, he can do without them."[28]

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[26] Hamilton, *Party Politics*, pp. 59-60.

[27] *Standard*, March 8, 1843.

It is true that the Whigs did get some "special satisfaction" out of the division in the Democratic ranks. Because the vote for Saunders was smaller than that for Brown, it was agreed among the Whigs that a sufficient Whig vote should be cast for Saunders to complicate the matter and continue the deadlock. The regular Whig candidate had been William A. Graham, but the party had finally come to an agreement to withdraw Graham's candidacy and to vote for Saunders.[29] This crisis was sufficient to bring the Democrats to a compromise. Brown and Saunders were dropped and William H. Haywood, Jr., was agreed upon. On December 21st the *Standard* took "great pleasure in being able to announce, that . . . after a season of bitter and . . . shameful contention" reconciliation had been attained and "that distinguished son of North Carolina, William Henry Haywood, Jr.," had been elected to the United States Senate.[30] Ninety-five votes were cast for Haywood, sixty-nine for Graham, and two for others. The election was not satisfactory to most of the Democrats as Haywood had often been known to act independently of party standards. In fact, the Whig congressional delegation from North Carolina seemed to get more general satisfaction out of the election than did the Democratic delegation. W. H. Washington in a letter to John H. Bryan stated that the results of the election were highly gratifying to himself and all his Whig colleagues except two who had contended that the Whigs ought not to interfere in the Democratic quarrels. Washington further stated that his Democratic colleagues, with the exception of McKay, were highly vexed over the matter and condemned the whole proceeding.[31]

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[28] George C. Mendenhall to William A. Graham, William A. Graham Papers.

[29] George C. Mendenhall to Willie P. Mangum, December 19, 1842, Willie P. Mangum Papers, 1841-42.

[30] *Standard,* December 21, 1842.

[31] W. H. Washington to John H. Bryan, December 29, 1842, *John H. Bryan Papers,* 1841-53.

Saunders wrote a long explanation and justification of his course in the election proceedings. He also wrote Brown asking for an explanation of certain statements that Brown had made regarding him, and this correspondence was published in the *Standard*. The quarrel between the factions created by the affair continued for some time and had a demoralizing effect on the Democratic party. On more than one occasion it was the misfortune of the North Carolina Democrats to permit factional politics to demoralize the party in the hour of triumph.

THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS OF 1836 AND 1840

The two presidential elections falling within the period considered in this chapter excited an intense interest in North Carolina. In addition to the national issues we have already considered, issues of a personal nature involving the character, personal habits, and activities of the several candidates attracted considerable attention.

The chief interest in the presidential campaign of 1836 centered about the Democratic candidate. Perhaps no presidential candidate ever caused more personal hostility, or called for more labored support from his partisans in North Carolina than Martin Van Buren. He was abused and accused by his enemies and suspected and neglected by many of his partisans. In addition to the attempt to link his name with the abolitionist movement, his private life was exploited by the Whigs in an attempt to excite the "honest yeomanry" of North Carolina against him. For example, the Whig press with feigned indignation told how it was the habit of this "extravagant and aristocratic" widower to drive *four* horses hitched to a fine carriage. The *Standard* hastened to Van Buren's defense, stating it was a known fact that he used only *two* horses when he drove himself, and often he was known to ride in the common stage.[32] But the Whigs appeared to be incredulous. They later added the accusation that the "New York Magician" sent to the post office to get his mail instead of walking for it himself like a Democratic gentleman, and, furthermore, it was generally reported that he wore silk stockings.[33] Such accusations were vexatious to the Democrats; the Whigs were "stealing their thunder"!

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[32] *Standard*, September 24, 1835.

A more valid accusation against Van Buren linked his name with the system of corrupt patronage. The *Carolina Watchman* (Salisbury), declared that those who were opposed to the alarming extension of executive patronage and the principle of "to the victors belong the spoils" would "rush to the polls and boldly declare their disapprobation of the policy of the "New York Magician."[34] Bedford Brown came to the rescue of the Democratic party on the patronage issue in so far as North Carolina was concerned and showed the Democratic party in the state to have been less susceptible to the evils of patronage than the Whigs.[35]

The Whigs also attacked the method that had been used in selecting Van Buren as the Democratic candidate. The convention method of selecting the party candidates was new, and chiefly because it was new the Whigs attempted to excite prejudice against Van Buren by calling him the selection of the "Baltimore Caucus." Of course the Whigs were later to use the convention with as much emphasis on its necessity as if they were the originators of the institution. But there was one point in the Whig attack on the selection of the Baltimore Convention that was sufficiently true to be damaging. Van Buren was accused of being Jackson's selection, and it was pointed out that a dangerous precedent was being established in countenancing the interference of the President in the selection of his successor. The *Raleigh Register* gave the following typical expression of the Whigs on this point:

> The President of the United States, through the agency of his Star Chamber at Baltimore, has dictated to the free people of these United States whom they are to choose as his successor. The very attempt is sufficient, one would think, to curdle the blood in the veins of freemen. It may happen hereafter, if the example of re-echoing the selection of the Chief-Magistrate is sanctioned, that *that* officer may fancy that his son or

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[33] *Standard,* April 8, 1840.

[34] Quoted in the *Raleigh Register,* September 15, 1835.

[35] *Standard,* March 3, 1836.

his brother would make the best successor, and call upon the people to ratify his choice. Let then, the evil be nipped in the bud; for carried into practice, 'Twill be recorded for a precedent, and many an error, by the same example, will rush into the State.[36]

The Whigs also waged a lesser, but more demagogic, warfare against the vice-presidential nominee of the Democratic party, R. M. Johnson. The private life of Johnson was attacked by several of the Whig newspapers of the state. The *Oxford Examiner* gave out the statement that Johnson had a mulatto wife. The *Observer* increased the number to "two black wives and mulatto girls" whom Johnson was accused of attempting to introduce into Kentucky society on the grounds that they were "as good as any white ladies." The *Standard* reported that a Kentucky friend of Johnson had seen the article in the *Observer* and had branded it as false. The newspaper stated that Johnson's friend admitted his having two illegitimate children by a mulatto woman, but this was when he was young and "before he had laid aside the follies of youth." The *Standard* then attempted to prove Johnson a man of respectability and influence, supporting these contentions with such evidence as the fact that Johnson was an active member of the Baptist church.[37] The Whigs were accused of being hostile to him on the grounds of an alleged refusal of the Democratic candidate to become a candidate of the Whig party for President of the United States.

Judged by the usual party issues, Johnson was accused of being unacceptable to the South because he was an "uncompromising Bank, Tariff, and Internal Improvements man."[38] Especially was the issue of inconsistency on the bank question brought against him. The *Standard* felt the necessity of giving a survey of his congressional career in defending him on this point.

Johnson, therefore, was accepted by the Democrats of North Carolina in much the same spirit with which they accepted Van

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[36] *Raleigh Register,* July 28, 1835.

[37] *Standard,* November 3, 1836.

[38] *Raleigh Register,* June 2, 1835.

Buren—with an apparently artificial enthusiasm. Yet it is doubtless true that many felt he would make a very acceptable vice-president. The Democratic Central Committee characterized him as "a plain, unostentatious Republican . . . Without any pretensions to high birth or distinguished parentage, he is one of the people, and his friends claim for him (which he has well earned) the title of a good man and a true patriot."[39]

An examination of the Democratic attitude toward the Whig candidates indicates that there was a tendency in North Carolina not to take seriously Judge White of Tennessee as the Whig candidate for president. An attempt was made to show that White had followed the Democratic program of legislation in his congressional career until he was approached by the Whigs to become their candidate. Ridicule was also used against the Whig candidate, as the following reputed observations of a western Whig who had met White in Washington will indicate:

> And is THAT *Judge White*? Is *that* our Southern candidate for the Presidency? I am sorry I have *seen* him—and I'm still more mortified on CONVERSING with him! I had *hoped* he was a man on whom the South could, without shame, rally as a *champion* of their cause. But—alas! *that* old man will be a mill-stone about our necks.[40]

As the agitation for White continued in the state, the Whigs were accused of using the Tennessean as a "stool pigeon to decoy some of the Jackson men out of the Democratic ranks and thus overthrow the Republican party and defeat the will of the people."[41] Such statements, however, indicated more an attempt to cast odium on the Whigs for making White a sectional candidate that any actual fear of an overthrow of the Republican party.

The time came when there were indications among the North Carolina Whigs of a waning enthusiasm for White and a rallying to General Harrison. With this noticeable change the Democratic newspapers began to center their attack on Harrison. The chief accusations brought against him were abolitionism, inconsistency on the tariff issue, and faulty administration as governor of Ohio. Regarding the last issue there was an attempt to show that Harrison was responsible for selling prisoners into slavery while he was a territorial governor. Since these issues were revived in 1840 and treated in much more detail, we shall defer further discussion of them until we consider the campaign of that year.

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[39] William H. Haywood, Jr., and others, *An Address to the Freemen of North Carolina.*

[40] *Standard,* September 29, 1836.

[41] *Ibid.,* July 31, 1835.

As the election of 1836 approached, the Democrats worked with more than their usual vigor, having been especially spurred on by their defeat in the state elections of that year. Capital was made of the fact that Nathaniel Macon had once again come from his retirement and consented to run as one of the Democratic electors. This was the last public service of the "Venerable Democrat" for his party. As this interesting old leader passed from the stage of action, the Democratic party of North Carolina was celebrating its last victory in the national elections for many years to come. The election returns indicated that 21,408 votes were cast for Whig electors and 36,684 votes for Democratic electors.[42]

The presidential campaign for the election of 1840 began early. Van Buren had been in the White House only a few days when Whig papers of the North announced Harrison and Benton as Whig candidates for the next presidential campaign. The *Standard* suggested that it might be well for the Whigs to wait for a while and see whether the interests of the country might not require the reëlection of Van Buren. The candidacy of Harrison was characterized as "fudge." But as the campaign developed, Harrison came to occupy the central position of the political stage. All the accusations that had been used against him in 1836 were revived and developed in much greater detail. The Democrats of North Carolina made out the following list of accusations against him: he was an abolitionist; he put himself under keepers and would not commit himself on any issue at stake; he was not held in confidence by the people of his home, as was indicated by the fact that he was defeated in a race for governor of Ohio by a vote of 4,000 to 40,000, and that the people of his home county had voted for a cake peddler for the legislature rather than vote for him; while in the diplomatic service, he was ordered home from Colombia because he had meddled in the local politics of that country; his name had been struck off the list of officers and soldiers in the resolutions that had been offered in Congress as an expression of appreciation from the government of the services of those who had served in the last war (1812); and he had approved measures in Ohio and Indiana that provided for the hiring out of criminals for the lesser offenses rather than committing them to the penitentiary. The Democrats labeled this last accusation as white slavery and made much of it in their campaign against Harrison. Arguments were made in true demagogic fashion, including such appeals as this example from a pamphlet issued by two Democratic congressmen:

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[42] *A Manual of North Carolina*, ed. Connor, p. 984. Presidential and gubernatorial election returns will hereafter be cited from this manual.

> How would you feel to see one of your poor but respectable and good neighbor men sold at auction by the sheriff of your county as a slave, under this Harrison law, to some free negro? And only think of what would be your feelings to see one of your poor but respectable neighbor-women knocked off under the sheriff's hammer to a free negro as his slave, to be under his commands, and compelled to obey them, whatever they might be; and should she resist and disobey and leave her black master's service, and he should apprehend her and drag her before a justice of the peace, and under this Harrison law have thirty-nine lashes inflicted upon this white female slave, and then compel her to serve two days for every one she had lost from her black master's service, would you be willing to vote for such a man as president?[43]

But the Democrats had gone too far in this appeal. James Graham, the Whig congressman from the twelfth congressional district, took up the challenge. He showed that the Democratic congressmen, Hawkins and Montgomery, had copied only a part of the law in question. Stating that he had authority as high as Heaven that truth is great and shall prevail, Graham proceeded to give an important part of the law that had been omitted by the Democratic congressmen, which read as follows: "No Negro, Mulatto, or Indian shall at any time purchase any servant other than of their own complexion, and if any of the persons of the aforesaid shall nevertheless presume to purchase a white servant, such servant shall immediately become free, and shall be so held, deemed and taken."[44]

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[43] James Graham, *To the Freemen of the Twelfth Congressional District of North Carolina.* (A pamphlet dated July 4, 1840.)

Graham continued by explaining that when these laws were passed in Indiana, the territory was a wilderness where jails were few, money was scarce, and taxes were high. He defended the method of dealing with criminals as excellent and just and concluded with the following appeal that displayed tactics similar to those used by the Democratic Congressmen:

> Surely it is more just that the infamous rogue go into the field and work and pay the jailor for his meat and bread than that he should set quietly in the prison (perhaps playing cards with some fellow sinner) and occasionally peep through the grates and oversee some honest farmer toiling to feed his family, and obliged to pay high taxes besides to support and maintain lazy rascals who starve their own families and steal from their neighbors.[45]

In the end the whole affair probably did more harm to the cause of the Democrats than to Harrison, not so much because the Democrats were belittling themselves by demagogism, for demagogism was the order of the day, but because the Democrats were beaten at a game in which the Whigs had proved themselves more adroit.

Political issues bearing on the great questions of the day were hard to find in the campaign of 1840. Harrison was well protected by his "keepers," who would not suffer him to speak or write. Vain attempts were made by the Democrats of the state to put the campaign on the basis of such issues as the currency question. But so colorful a campaign could not admit of practical questions. Finally the *Standard* gave the following as the Whig platform:

> According to the Whig notions Harrison should be elected President, because:

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[44] James Graham, *To the Freemen of the Twelfth Congressional District of North Carolina.*

[45] *Ibid.*

1st. He lives in a log cabin. (A monstrous whopper.)
2nd. Because he drinks hard cider. (We dare say he does, handsomely laced with whiskey.)
3rd. Because he gave a horse to a Methodist preacher.
4th. Because he got a place at West Point for the son of a poor neighbor.
5th. Because he went into his barn and thrashed some wheat.
6th. Because he asked a soldier to eat dinner with him.[46]

The "Log-Cabin-Hard-Cider" campaign of the Whigs was a vexation to the Democrats. The Democratic newspapers of North Carolina attempted to appeal to reason, but were answered with "hurrahs"; they attempted to raise issues and were confronted with log cabins and hard cider; they attempted to ridicule and were laughed at. In despair the *Standard* complained: "They fill the ears with the cries of 'Log Cabin!' 'Hard Cider!' 'Tippecanoe!' 'Typ and Ty!' and the like, but no appeal to the understanding of the people, grounded in truth; nor give any account of their candidate which can claim the credit of impartial history."[47]

Again and again such editorials appeared in the Democratic papers. The true state of Harrison's economic condition was given, the lack of dignity in the Whig campaign methods, the inconsistency and hypocrisy of the leveling pretensions of the Whig leaders—all were emphasized and reëmphasized, but the Democratic voice was too weak and the Whig noise too loud. The Democrats were to learn that emotional enthusiasm is often a better method of winning votes than logical reasoning.

In all this excitement, at times, Van Buren was all but forgotten. Vice-President Johnson *was* forgotten. Many Democrats of North Carolina had hoped that King, of Alabama, or Polk, of Tennessee, might be the nominee for vice-president, but when Johnson was nominated by the convention he was accepted, and practically nothing more was said about him.

As the election approached, the Democrats gave evidence of expecting that which the state elections had foreshadowed.

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[46] *Standard,* July 1, 1840.

[47] *Ibid.*

Sobriety hardly expected to win. Bedford Brown wrote Van Buren on October 31st:

> If the efforts of the Democratic party shall prove successful, they will deserve the highest and most honorable page in the Nation's history and to yourself will be due the imperishable honor of having lead them to victory over the most mercenary, profligate, and powerfully organized parties, which the hope of plunder and the promptings of ambition have ever banded together.[48]

The vote cast in the election was the largest that had been cast in a general election in North Carolina. It stood 33,175 for Van Buren and 46,316 for Harrison, a total vote of 79,491. In 1836, 52,056 votes had been cast, which would indicate that 27,435 more votes were cast in 1840 than in 1836.[49] The Democratic explanation of the great increase in the vote cast in 1840 was that the Whigs had practised a great deal of fraud. It was with some bitterness that the *Standard* announced the results of the election, stating that a "talented and accomplished statesman, the pride of American Democracy, has been defeated and defeated too by an *imbecile,* a mere *man of straw, a stuffed image,* dressed in *borrowed plumes,* and in *the keeping of a committee*!"[50] Bedford Brown perhaps exaggerated matters when he wrote Van Buren that he considered the sovereignty of the people as having been subdued "by foreign influence and domestic corporate influence united together and brought to bear on the ballot box."[51] Brown was one of the few comforts that Van Buren retained in North Carolina!

ELECTIONS OF GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 1835-1843

It will be remembered that one of the constitutional amendments of 1835 provided that the governor of the state should be elected by the voters rather than by the General Assembly. Hence the first popular election of a governor took place in 1836. Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr., a Democrat, had been elected by the General Assembly of 1835. On the adjournment of the General Assembly the newspapers of the state began the process of selecting the candidates for governor who should enter the contest of 1836. It was natural that there should have been general agreement among the Democrats on the candidacy of Governor Spaight for a second term, a courtesy usually extended under the old régime. After various candidates had been suggested, the Whigs finally settled on Edward B. Dudley. The issues between the candidates were almost entirely confined to national topics. The opinions of Spaight and Dudley were examined on abolition, nullification, banks, and distribution, with the result that each party found the candidate of the opposition an abolitionist, a nullifier, and unsafe on the bank and distribution issues. The attitudes of the candidates on the presidential candidates were also a matter of much debate. The Democrats sought to arouse the state on the question of instruction of United States senators. This issue had been made vital because of the refusal of Senator Mangum at that time to obey the instructions of the General Assembly on the "expunging resolutions." About the only attack made by the Whigs on Governor Spaight's administration came as a result of the failure of the governor to call a special election in the twelfth congressional district and thereby settle a contested election.

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[48] Bedford Brown to Martin Van Buren, October 31, 1840, North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

[49] *A Manual of North Carolina,* p. 984.

[50] *Standard,* November 25, 1840.

[51] Bedford Brown to Martin Van Buren, February 17, 1841, North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

The election resulted in a victory for the Whigs. Spaight received 29,950 votes and Dudley 33,993. The result was most disheartening to the Democrats, who were surprised as well as disappointed. The election of members of the General Assembly resulted in a tie on joint ballot, due to a Whig member's resigning before the meeting of the legislature and a Democrat's being elected to fill the vacancy. The Whigs were successful in selecting the speaker of the Senate, while the Democrats of the House had a sufficient majority to elect one of their party as speaker of the House.

Various explanations were offered by the Democrats in accounting for the results of the elections. Perhaps the explanation offered by Bedford Brown was as reasonable as any. According to Brown the "unexpected and disastrous" results had come because of the unpopularity of Spaight and the Whig misrepresentations of the Democratic party on the leading issues of the day.[52] The more aggressive leadership of the Whigs and the growing popularity of that party in the West offered an explanation that the Democrats were not ready to admit.

With the opening of the campaign for governor in 1838 an interesting situation arose. Editor Loring, of the *Standard,* had never been able to work himself up into an exciting opposition to Governor Dudley. In fact, during the gubernatorial campaign of 1836 Loring had confessed that Dudley was "one whom we personally love and esteem."[53] In view of this attachment, the precedent of a second term, and the fact that there was apparently no prominent Democratic candidate forthcoming, it was not altogether surprising that Loring should have announced in February, 1838, that it was the opinion of Democratic leaders that there should be no opposition to Governor Dudley in the election of that year. Loring hastened to add that the expression was what he believed to be the wishes of the Democrats and that if it was not he was "ready to be corrected by the public voice."[54] He was to be corrected, but not until an extended explanation had been offered which gave the reasons why the Democratic party should not put a candidate in the field. These reasons may be summarized as follows: (1) If the Governor's election is contested on party grounds at every new turn it will "greatly disturb the repose of the state." (2) If the conduct of the executive office of the state is unexceptionable it gives the incumbent claim for reëlection, and Dudley's conduct has given no dissatisfaction to the citizens of the state. (3) In the present abolitionist crisis the South should be undivided.[55] This list of reasons was followed with a justification of Governor Dudley's administration that might have been mistaken for campaign material of a Whig paper. A correspondent of the *Tarborough Press* was among the first to voice opposition to the opinion of the *Standard* on this matter of the Democrats' leaving the field to the Whigs. Strong opposition was expressed for what the correspondent called the "political sin done in Raleigh." Loring took pleasure in quoting to the *Tarborough Citizen* a letter received from a prominent Democrat of Tarborough, in which the opinion was expressed that "the writer and many friends of the Republican party concur in opinion that no candidate should oppose Dudley."[56]

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[52] Bedford Brown to Martin Van Buren, October 11, 1836, North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

[53] *Standard,* July 7, 1836.

[54] *Ibid.,* February 7, 1838.

[55] *Ibid.,* February 14, 1838.

Of course it was to be expected that there would be some uneasiness manifested in the Democratic ranks over the possible Whig interpretation of the *Standard* editorial as a weakening of the Democratic party in the support of their principles. An uneasy correspondent wrote Loring:

> If it shall for a moment be thought, by any person, that this is an indication of favor, by the people of this State, for a National Bank, a high Tariff, or an exercise of power by congress for internal improvements by the General Government, then we can and will show these persons, that we have a man who is opposed to each and all these propositions, that can and must send Governor Dudley home.[57]

The Whigs, for the most part, were disposed "to flout at the Democratic party, in consequence of the late avowal of opinions *averse to an opposition* to Governor Dudley."[58] Such an attitude naturally aroused some bitterness and caused increased discontent in the Democratic party. In spite of this it seemed, for a time, that the party would abide by the opinion expressed in the *Standard* and that Dudley would be reëlected without opposition.

As the election day approached, evidently it came to be more and more apparent to the Democrats that it would be disastrous to the party to be without a candidate, for such a situation meant that the party was not exercising one of the chief functions that justify its existence. Furthermore, the strain of being without a candidate was too great for seasoned politicians. It was, therefore, determined that the Democrats should have a candidate in spite of the awkward position in which the party found itself.

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[56] *Standard*, February 21, 1838.

[57] *Ibid.*, February 28, 1838.

[58] *Ibid.*, March 7, 1838.

To trace the circumstances leading to this decision, it is necessary to refer to a series of events which took place in the latter part of 1837 and the early part of 1838. These events center about John Branch, a prominent North Carolina Democrat who was at that time without political office. In the fall of 1837 Branch passed through Raleigh on his way to Florida. He was well known in Raleigh, having been Governor of North Carolina three times under the old régime, in addition to having held a number of other important offices, including a place in President Jackson's Cabinet. It was, therefore, natural that he should have seen a number of important officials, including the Governor, while he was passing through the state Capital in 1837. During a conversation with Governor Dudley, Branch was informed by the Governor that he would not be a candidate for reëlection.[59] On the evening of the same day Branch was strongly solicited by friends to run as Governor Dudley's successor[60] and consented to do so. On the next day while on his way to Hillsboro he was overtaken by a prominent Whig of Orange County who urged him to announce himself as a candidate to succeed Governor Dudley. This Whig assured Branch that Whig assistance would be given him in launching his campaign in the following spring.[61] Branch would doubtless have been acceptable to some Whigs because of his break with Jackson and his friendship with many Whigs in the state. Furthermore, he was not in harmony with many of the old-line Democrats and was not considered "unsafe" by the Whigs on any question other than the bank issue. But before the arrival of spring the *Standard* editorial disapproving opposition to Dudley appeared, and the Governor announced himself a candidate for a second term. Nothing was done officially regarding the candidacy of Branch until a few weeks before the election was to take place. Then the nomination of Branch as the candidate of the Democratic party came from a rather obscure source. A meeting was held on June 30 at the house of John McCullers, in Wake County, the object of which, according to announcements, was to collect taxes and hold a muster of one of the companies of the state militia. The stated object of the meeting was overshadowed, however, by the activities of those who were interested in politics. After speeches from local candidates, a meeting was called in a large room of McCullers' house. Here resolutions on national issues were drawn up and John Branch was nominated for governor.[62] Branch was informed of this action by a letter and was asked to make a statement of his opinion on the issues of the Bank of United States and the Independent Treasury. He accepted the nomination and made the Bank of the United States and strict construction of the Federal Constitution the issues of the campaign. The *Standard* issued an extra announcing Branch's candidacy, which the *Raleigh Register* severely condemned and ridiculed. Never did the *Register* have a better opportunity for such an attack. The announcement of the candidacy of Branch had come within about a month of the election, the Democratic party "organ" had announced that there would be no opposition to Governor Dudley, and the belated Democratic candidate had definitely broken relationship with President Jackson. On this last point the *Register* stated:

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[59] *Standard,* July 18, 1838.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] John Branch to Robert A. Ezell, July 26, 1838, *Standard,* August 1, 1838.

> Afraid to bring out a man boldly, of their own party, they are willing to compromise their principles, and take up with a man, who with the exception of his opinions on the Sub-Treasury Scheme, is, we learn, as decidedly opposed to Van Buren as Dudley—a man who is perhaps more obnoxious to General Jackson than almost any other man in the Union. . . . With the exception of his twists about the 'Constitutional Treasury' we consider him a marvelously proper Whig.[63]

The *Register* also attacked Branch on the ground that he was not a citizen of North Carolina, the basis of this attack being not only the fact that Branch had a plantation in Florida and spent a part of each year in that territory, but also that he had been a candidate for membership in the convention called to form the constitution of Florida. Notwithstanding the accusations, Branch maintained that his citizenship was in North Carolina and that in the matter of the Florida constitutional convention he had merely yielded to the solicitations of citizens of that territory to assist in forming their state government.[64]

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[62] *Standard*, July 4, 1838.

[63] *Raleigh Register*, July 16, 1838.

Of course the attitude of the *Standard* toward the candidacy of Branch was embarrassing, but Loring put up a bold front and stated that he had nothing to take back in regard to his editorials on a second term for Governor Dudley.

With such a situation the Democrats had little hope of succeeding in the campaign. The brief campaign was largely conducted through the columns of the *Standard* and the *Register*. The election resulted in the triumph of Dudley, who received 34,329 votes against the 20,153 cast for Branch. The Democrats were also defeated in the elections of members for the General Assembly. Sixty-five Whigs and fifty-one Democrats were elected to the House of Commons, and twenty-seven Whigs and twenty-two Democrats were elected to the Senate.[65] About the only consolation that the Democrats got out of the election was the defeat of Willie P. Mangum, who was a candidate in Orange County for state senator. Mangum stated in the campaign that "the Van Buren party would rather see the Devil unchained and put in the legislature" than to see him elected, and the *Standard* agreed that "there would be little choice between the alternatives suggested."[66]

The campaign of 1839-40 opened with activities indicating that the Democrats were determined never again to be caught in a situation similar to that of 1838. Perhaps this determination assisted in making the campaign of 1839-40 a notable one in party history in North Carolina. In this campaign party machinery was more highly developed and extensively used in the state than in previous campaigns. State conventions were held for the first time. The counties were organized, and numerous meetings were held throughout the state preceding the state convention. Committees of vigilance were appointed in most of the counties, and the Democratic Central Committee acted with considerable energy as the executive of the party.

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[64] *Standard,* August 1, 1838.

[65] "A Directory of Members of the General Assembly," John H. Bryan Papers, 2nd Series, 1838-39.

[66] *Standard,* July 25, 1838.

There was no lack of Democratic candidates. The various county meetings took care to see that the party should have an ample list to select from. The favorites suggested included Bedford Brown, Louis D. Henry, Weldon N. Edwards, William D. Moseley, William A. Blount, Henry W. Connor, William H. Haywood, Jr., and Romulus M. Saunders. Of these prospective candidates it appeared that William H. Haywood, Jr., was the most popular, he having been nominated in about twenty counties. But Haywood was not disposed to run. He wrote a long letter in reply to the nomination given him by the county meeting in Mecklenburg County, in which he stated that private duties prevented him from being a candidate for governor at that time.[67] Next to Haywood, Romulus M. Saunders and Louis D. Henry appeared to be the favorites.

Provision for the calling of the first state Democratic convention had been made by a party caucus at the close of the General Assembly in 1839. This caucus appointed the Central Committee and empowered the Committee with the authority to determine the time and place for the meeting of the state convention. On October 23, 1839, the Central Committee issued a call for the state convention to meet in Raleigh on January 8, 1840.

Thirty-eight counties were represented in the convention; in this number were eleven Western counties, including the mountain counties, Ashe and Burke. Louis D. Wilson of Edgecombe County was unanimously elected president of the convention. Two committees were selected to shape the policies and politics of the Democrats. A committee of twenty-six, two from each congressional district, was appointed to draw up a platform. A second committee of thirteen was appointed to frame an address to the people. The committees presented to the convention a review of the national issues before the people of the country at that time and gave the characteristic Democratic approbations and condemnations. Louis D. Henry made it known that he did not desire the nomination for governor, thus making the way clear for an unanimous nomination of Romulus M. Saunders.[68] Judge Saunders appeared before the convention and delivered a speech signifying his acceptance of the nomination.[69] Most of the address was devoted to national politics, but the candidate did express favor of internal improvements in case a program could be adopted that would not incur state debt, and he expressed a desire to have the fund for public schools conserved.[70]

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[67] *Standard,* December 4, 1839.

The campaign which followed was one of amusing interest. The Whigs had nominated John M. Morehead, of Guilford County. No more interesting pair of politicians could have been selected for the campaign. Saunders and Morehead agreed to meet at different points throughout the state in joint debate. The following account of these debates will serve to indicate their nature:

> The relations between the candidates was good throughout, though each made charges against the other of abolition sympathy, of federalism, of nullification sentiment, and of other things too numerous and absurd to chronicle. Neither attempted oratory, but when arguments were attempted, appealed to common sense. Unfortunately real arguments were not common. Neither of them was a demagogue, and yet each resorted to the tricks and manners of one. The story is familiar of how Saunders challenged Morehead, saying, 'Whar, sir, does the gentleman git his authority for that thar statement? I ask him whar?' to be answered by Morehead's seizing two books and holding them with the words, 'In them thar dokiments, sir. That's whar.' Morehead devoted much of his time to denunciation of the extravagance of the Democratic national administration, an argument of greater weight nowhere than in North Carolina. He rang the changes on this, condemning the administration for furnishing the White House, for improving its grounds, for furnishing soap and towels to the government

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[68] William A. Graham to his wife, Raleigh, January 8, 1840, William A Graham Papers, 1840-41.

[69] Saunders was a judge on the Superior bench at that time, but he immediately resigned upon being nominated.

[70] *Standard*, January 15, 1840.

employees, and for using too much ice. He demanded of Saunders the reason for the last mentioned "extravagance," and, when the latter replied that Washington wells were bad, that cisterns had to be used, making ice necessary, said with emphasis that the government might as well pay for the bread and meat for the clerks as to furnish them with water.[71]

The press of the state conducted a similar warfare. The following is a characteristic accusation of the Whig press against the Democratic nominee: "Judge Saunders voted when in the House of Representatives of the United States, for a proposition appropriating $26,000 for finishing the North Portico of the President's house . . . $26,000 to finish a portico! How many comfortable houses would this build for the honest farmers?"[72]

This Whig accusation of Democratic extravagance was an exasperation to the Democrats. Had not the Democratic party always stood as the foe of extravagance and the champion of economy? The *Standard* branded the Whig tactics as demagogism, as it certainly was. According to this paper, Morehead was "not a man to take his stand upon great measures of state or national policy," but rather one who chose "to handle such articles as 'ice, towels, and soap,' with the like items in the contingent expenditures of the Departments—together with the Ogle falsehoods against the President for the use of the table articles or furniture purchased by President Monroe."[73] But it was not until after Morehead had been elected governor that the Democrats were able to do justice to this theoretical opponent of extravagance. Then the *Standard* made the following comment on a bill appropriating four thousand dollars to be used in furnishing and repairing the governor's house:

> We are informed that *towels* were among the first items provided for his Excellency's establishment, out of the $4,000 appropriated by our 'economical,' 'reform,' 'Whig' Legislature. . . . And soap too—soap was the electioneering carpet, and the people taught to be very much astonished at the Government's extravagance in that article.—What did North Carolina's 'executive' soap cost per cake—ha?[74]

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[71] Hamilton, *Party Politics*, p. 61.

[72] *Raleigh Register*, May 29, 1840.

[73] *Standard*, September 2, 1840.

[74] *Ibid.*, February 10, 1841.

A much larger vote was cast in 1840 than in 1838. While the Democrats cast over fifteen thousand more votes than they had polled in 1838, the Whigs polled a total of more than 10,000 over the votes cast for the Whig candidate of 1838. The Whig majority in 1840 was 8,581. The Democrats fared no better in the election of the General Assembly, the Whigs having a majority of thirty-five on joint ballot in that body.

The Democratic lamentation over the loss of the elections was louder than usual. One prominent Democratic leader received the following lament from a friend:

> Oh, the elections throughout the State, how painful the reflection that every department of the State Government is to be under the control of Whigery—and the Senators to Congress both Whigs. Pity, pity, that this political paradise should be turned into *Hell* but friend David don't give up the ship. Let us hope that there is a redeeming spirit in the people.[75]

The news of the Democratic failure was received by Democrats outside the state with much regret. There was more than usual interest in the election because of the bearing it would have on the presidential election in November. Van Buren's friends in the state wrote him gloomy letters. Several explanations were offered for the Democratic defeat. According to Haywood the citizens of the state were in favor of the National Bank and would not accept any candidate who opposed the "great regulator."[76] Bedford Brown explained that Clay's proposition for the distribution of the proceeds of public lands had won many to the Whig ranks in North Carolina. Brown further explained that the scarcity of money and a misunderstanding of Poinsett's plan for the reorganization of state militia had militated against the Democratic party in North Carolina.[77] But when all explanations had been offered the Democrats still faced the disagreeable fact that they had not yet succeeded in electing a governor of the state.

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[75] Q. Anderson to David S. Reid, September 5, 1840, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. I (1803-45).

[76] William H. Haywood, Jr., to Martin Van Buren, August 15, 1840, North Carolina Letters from the Van Buren Papers, 1824-58.

[77] Bedford Brown to Martin Van Buren, August 30, 1840, *ibid.*

The second Democratic state convention met in Raleigh on January 10, 1842. The attendance on this convention was not so large as that on the first convention. Bad weather conditions and a disagreement among the party leaders on the meeting place were perhaps the chief reasons for the falling off in attendance. Only twenty-four counties were represented, and the official register showed only one hundred delegates in attendance. The convention was organized with Henry Fitts, of Warren County, as chairman. The platform, the address to the people, and addresses made by various leaders were all devoted to national politics. About the only item that could be considered a state issue was the demand of the platform that the state banks resume specie payments. One item in the platform resulted in some embarrassment to the Democrats. In a spirit of retaliation for the accusations of extravagance lodged against Van Buren by the Whigs, the platform committee included in the platform a condemnation of the expenditure of $3,000 of Federal funds on the funeral of President Harrison. William H. Haywood, Jr., had been "unavoidably" absent from the convention when the platform was framed, but he came into the convention in time to hear it read. When John H. Wheeler, who had read the platform to the convention, resumed his seat, Haywood arose and stated his objection to including in it any mention of the funeral expenses of President Harrison. He stated that he considered the mention of such a matter too small to be made political capital. Wheeler answered Haywood by stating that omission of some mention of the funeral expenses of President Harrison would be to throw aside a most powerful political weapon. Wheeler called attention to the treatment that Van Buren had received at the hands of the Whigs and stated that they intended to fight the devil with his own weapons. Haywood again arose in the convention and in an eloquent plea "begged his fellow Democrats, not to imitate the example of their political opponents, but to strive to conduct the campaign on principles calculated to elevate, not madden the public mind." He concluded by stating that "for his part, though professing to be a good Democrat, he trusted he should ever act like a gentleman and a Christian in all relations in life." The chairman of the convention next spoke, characterizing the speech of Haywood as unjust and ungenerous. Haywood then arose and asked leave of absence, and "wishing the members severally safe and happy journeys home he bade them good evening and disappeared."[78] An attempt was made after his departure to have the obnoxious clause taken from the platform, but without avail. The platform was almost unanimously adopted by the convention. Of course this affair was hailed with satisfaction by the Whig press. The *Greensborough Patriot,* the *Fayetteville Observer,* and the *Raleigh Register* were especially warm in their commendations of Haywood's attitude, but Haywood did not hesitate to inform the Whigs that he was still a good Democrat and would support the nominee of the convention. Louis D. Henry, of Cumberland County, was unanimously nominated by the convention as the Democratic candidate for governor. Henry made a speech of acceptance before the convention and later wrote a letter of acceptance of unusual length. Both the letter and the speech were devoted to national issues. Before the convention adjourned it was decided that another state convention should be held in Salisbury on the twentieth of the following May in order to rally the West to the Democratic standard.

The Salisbury Convention, referred to by contemporary writers as the "great convention," was a much more imposing assemblage than the Raleigh Convention had been. The *North Carolinian* stated that more than four hundred delegates with the visitors made the attendance upon the meetings about two thousand. This same paper estimated that about thirty counties were represented. The convention was organized with Henry W. Connor as president. Letters were read on this occasion from a number of leading Democrats of the nation including John C. Calhoun, Levi Woodbury, George McDuffie, James Buchanan, Silas Wright, Jr., James K. Polk, William R. King, F. W. Pickens, J. R. J. Daniel, and Romulus M. Saunders. Henry, the Democratic candidate for governor, appeared before the convention and explained that his illness, which had been serious for some time, prevented his making an address. Various speakers were called on for addresses, and a committee on resolutions brought forth a document not differing in characteristics from its predecessor of the Raleigh Convention. One interesting reflection of the convention was the attitude manifested toward John C. Calhoun. In 1835 Calhoun had been in much disfavor among the North Carolina Democrats because of his nullification attitude and his break with President Jackson. But as the abolition issue came to be more vital, Calhoun came to be an acceptable leader to many of the Democrats. Romulus M. Saunders, in his letter to the convention, advocated the endorsement of Calhoun as the next Democratic candidate for President.[79] Later in the summer of 1842 Calhoun was invited to the state to speak at a great public gathering assembled at Shocco Springs in Warren County. Regarding this meeting one Democrat wrote a friend:

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[78] *Raleigh Register,* January 14, 1842.

> The citizens of Warren County are to give a great dinner at Shocco Springs to Mr. Calhoun after the adjournment of Congress. Some of the leading Democrats here are in favor of his nomination for the Presidency, others go for Mr. Van Buren. I am prepared to go for either, and will certainly go to the dinner.[80]

The campaign for governor in 1842 was characterized by the same spirit of demagogism that was so much in evidence during the campaign of 1840. The Democrats had been "keeping books" on Governor Morehead since his "economy" campaign, and were, therefore, ready with a considerable list of inconsistencies charged to the Governor's account by the opening of the campaign of 1842. The most important items of the list were the basis of the following statements regarding the Governor's actions:

1. He had ridiculed Van Buren for having expensive furniture in the White House, and had used the money of the State to buy rich furniture for the Governor's house.

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[79] *Standard,* June 8, 1842.

[80] Allen C. Jones to James H. Ruffin, August 7, 1842, *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin,* ed. Hamilton, II, 208.

2. He had ridiculed Van Buren for beautifying the public grounds of the White House, and had done the same thing at public expense for the Governor's house.
3. He had abused Van Buren by falsely accusing him of sending his son to Europe at public expense, and then had appointed a kinsman to fill an office in the State that the appointee was incompetent to fill.
4. He stated in 1840 that he could not say too much against State banks, and in 1841 he approved suspension of specie payments.
5. He abused Van Buren because departments at Washington had ice water for clerks, and then built an ice house on the grounds of the Governor's house.
6. He had expressed a desire to tax chickens in 1840 and then had built a henhouse on the palace grounds to keep chickens for himself.[81]

It might not have been an accident that the *Register* selected April 1 as the day on which to publish its answer to the last two accusations saying, in part:

> Awful News! Astounding Disclosures!! Liberty in Danger!!! The Judgments of Heaven Visited on Gov. Morehead's Ice House!!!
>
> It is now ascertained beyond the possibility of a doubt, that Governor Morehead has not only erected an ice-house, but has also had the unparalleled effrontery to build him a chicken coop!!! But mark you how these wicked proceedings have been visited with the vengeance of Heaven: the water refused to freeze, says the Carolinian, by the special interposition of Providence, who has caused such a mild winter over the whole Union, that at least two-thirds of the people of the United States must suffer for Morehead's temerity. As to the chicken coop no visible demonstration of any angry Providence has yet been made, but we look with fear and trembling for some violent concussion of nature.[82]

The Whigs could find little in the career of Henry that could be used against him in the campaign. The two major accusations used against him were based on his attitude on the bank issue and his conduct while acting as a commissioner to settle claims under the Spanish treaty. The *Fayetteville Ob-*

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[81] *Standard,* May 25, 1842.

[82] *Raleigh Register,* April 1, 1842.

server stated that this same Henry, who was so ferocious against banks, had been director of a bank, a large stockholder in the banks, and at one time an attorney for a bank.[83] Regarding his conduct while acting as commissioner, the Whigs accused Henry of accepting a large salary for services of only a short time. It was stated that he received a salary of $5,304.31 for services on a commission that met very infrequently. The *Standard* showed this accusation to be unjust in view of the fact that most of the time of the commissioners was taken up in study and preparation of material to be used in the meetings. It was further shown that the salary of the commissioners was fixed by Congress and approved by the Whig members of that body.

The canvass of the candidates in 1842 was not so exciting or so extensive as in the previous campaign. Because of feeble health, Henry was advised to begin his campaign in the West. He announced his speaking dates in the newspapers and Morehead was advised to meet him; but Morehead disregarded Henry's dates and announced his own dates in the East. While he was in the West, Henry did a very unusual thing for a candidate for public office in North Carolina; he devoted a considerable portion of his time to a discussion of state issues. The *Western North Carolinian* reported that his speech in Salisbury was about equally divided between federal and state affairs. This paper further comments that the discussion of state affairs "was rather new to the people, and they listened to the facts and arguments presented by the speaker with close attention. Unless we are much mistaken the concerns of the state will excite some more than usual interest, and create not a little trouble among the Whigs, the next summer."[84] Unfortunately the prediction was not to be fulfilled. Henry's health continued to fail him, and in the early part of July he wrote Loring that his physicians had advised him that a continuation of the canvass would endanger his life. With his abandonment of the canvass nothing further was heard of state issues. But before he discontinued his canvass, Henry met Morehead in debate at Fayetteville, June 7th. It was planned that each speaker should be allotted two hours. The *North Carolinian* reported that Henry spoke five hours and ten minutes and Morehead five hours and twenty minutes! The Democratic newspaper of Fayetteville declared, "Never before did we see a political audience so chained to their speakers—never did we see a more respectful and respectable audience!"[85] Little wonder Henry's physicians advised him to quit the campaign if he expected to live!

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[83] *Fayetteville Observer,* February 16, 1842.

[84] *Western North Carolinian* (Salisbury), April 6, 1842. (Quoted in the *Standard,* April 13, 1842.)

When Henry ceased to canvass the state the Whigs grew careless. The Democrats accused their opponents of spreading the false rumor that Henry was out of the race, and after the election the Whigs accused the Democrats of having withdrawn Henry from the race in order to run him in secretly after the Whigs had been thrown "off their guard."[86] There is no doubt about the activity of the Democrats during the last days of the campaign, and the results of the election did show the Whigs to be somewhat "off guard." Governor Morehead was reëlected by a vote of 37,943 to Henry's 34,411. A comparison with the election of 1840 shows a falling off in the Whig vote of 5,049. The total vote cast in 1840 was larger than that cast in 1842, but the falling off was largely in the Whig ranks. The Democrats were more successful in 1842 than two years earlier in the election of members to the General Assembly; they carried both houses, electing thirty out of the fifty Senators, and sixty-eight Democrats out of the 120 Commoners. This was of unusual importance to the Democratic party, for the General Assembly was to elect a United States Senator and to redistrict the state for legislative and congressional elections. The Democrats of North Carolina had reached an oasis; but there was to be no rest and little refreshment for them.

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[85] Quoted in the *Standard*, June 15, 1842.

[86] *Ibid.*, August 24, 1842.

PART THREE

AGGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP AND A TRIUMPHANT ISSUE, 1844-1850

CHAPTER VI

THE PARTIES AND THE ISSUES, 1844-1850

TERRITORIAL EXPANSION, SLAVERY, AND SECESSION

"I must press upon you," wrote a North Carolina Democrat to his Congressman in 1844, "the importance of urging the Texas question—it is founded in justice and reason and accords with popular sentiment."[1] While opinions may differ regarding the justice and reason embodied in the Texas question, there is little doubt regarding the fact that the issue accorded well with the popular sentiment of Democrats in the South. In the early development of the issue in North Carolina both Whigs and Democrats were inclined to favor annexation.[2] By 1844, however, the Democrats were practically united in favor of annexation, and the Whigs had come to be fairly well united in opposition to immediate annexation. The attitude assumed by Clay in his "Raleigh letter" did much to settle the Whig opinion in the state on the question. When it was known that Clay would come to Raleigh to make an address, the *Standard* demanded that there be no dodging on the part of the great Whig leader and his friends on the Texas issue. "We call upon his Whig friends here to have this question answered when he makes his speech in this city," challenged the Democratic newspaper.[3] Whether or not this demand produced Clay's "Raleigh letter" it is impossible to know, but we do know that it was after a consultation with three of the leading Whigs of the state that Clay wrote his famous letter.[4] When he later compromised the position assumed in the "Raleigh letter," the Democrats of North Carolina made capital of the matter. The Whigs in their dilemma attempted to shift the issue to "secession" by proclaiming that the Democrats were being driven into disunion sentiments by the Texas question.[5] At least one Whig leader, George E. Badger, boldly announced his objection to annexation on the basis of opposition to the expansion of slavery. The *Standard* stated that this was the "first step toward the promulgation of abolition principles in North Carolina" and called upon the people to see that it should be the last.[6]

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[1] R. P. Williamson to David S. Reid, July 29, 1844, David S. Reid Papers, 1803-45.

[2] In 1837 the *Raleigh Star*, a Whig paper, wrote: "The annexation of Texas is essential to the future safety and repose of this Confederacy." (August 23, 1837.)

[3] *Standard*, April 10, 1844.

[4] Hamilton, *Party Politics*, p. 96.

The usual arguments used throughout the country by those favoring annexation were freely used in North Carolina, and occasionally an argument with a flavor of originality would appear. One such argument was given in an article which appeared in the *Standard* over the signature "Planter" in the summer of 1844. "Planter" attempted to show that the slaveholder was by no means the only one who would be benefited by the acquisition of Texas. The following reasoning was used: "Every man, at the South, knows that the slave owner own [*sic*] nearly all of our good land. If the slaves are sent from among us, those who own the rich land will not suffer it to remain idle or unprofitable. They must rent it out or sell it; so that it must fall into the hands of the poor white laborers. It is unnecessary to say to the poor farmer what a change in his condition would soon be made by his having good land instead of poor to work."[7]

When the issue came before Congress in its final form, the Democratic senator representing North Carolina, William H. Haywood, Jr., received considerable praise for his work in securing harmony among the Democrats regarding the form of the bill. Haywood was the author of both the "Benton Bill" and the "Walker Amendment," measures which insured the success of annexation.[8]

Senator Haywood also rendered notable service in the settlement of the Oregon dispute. With his characteristic disregard for the extreme partisan view he disdained the "fifty-four forty or fight" spirit and advocated a settlement with Great

[5] *Raleigh Register,* October 1, 1844.

[6] *Standard,* October 30, 1844.

[7] *Ibid.,* July 6, 1844.

[8] *Ibid.,* March 26, 1845.

Britain on an agreement to accept the boundary at the forty-ninth degree. The speech excited considerable favorable comment throughout the country from various newspapers, including the *New York Herald,* the *New York Express,* the *New York Evening Post,* the *Harrisburg Union,* the *Boston Evening Traveller,* the *Charleston Mercury,* and the newspapers of both parties in North Carolina.[9] The *Fayetteville Observer* stated that it was "an able and patriotic speech, and withal as good a Whig speech in the main as any Whig could have delivered."[10] As on the Texas issue, the Whigs in North Carolina had taken the conservative view on the Oregon issue and the Democrats had stood for immediate acquisition. There had been some fear of possible war with England, an apprehension magnified by the Whigs and scoffed at by the Democrats. Congressman David S. Reid, who had taken a lively interest in the issue, kept in close touch with his constituency on the matter and was satisfied that, on the whole, North Carolinians neither wanted nor expected war over the issue. A quotation taken from one of a number of letters received by Reid from his constituency will illustrate how some of the more thoughtful citizens viewed the matter:

> There will be no war growing out of the Oregon question. It can't be, that England will go to war with America. The limits of this stub will not allow of my going at length into my reasons. I will therefore state only one or two. Her statesmen are sharpsighted and as much given to forecast as those of any other nation. They can but see what would be the final results. What would become of her American possessions? What of her cotton factories? What of the thousands of her subjects who are dependent upon that trade for their bread, their actual substance? Now that Texas is ours, the prospects would be too perilous for England; the annexation of Texas has closed and sealed the question of war between these Powers throughout all time. I may be wrong but I hazard the prediction, that no man now living, will ever witness a war between England and America.[11]

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[9] *Standard,* March 18, 1846.

[10] *Fayetteville Observer,* March 31, 1846.

[11] C. Groves to David S. Reid, January 15, 1846, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. II (1845-50).

Louis D. Henry wrote Reid that while he considered the American title to Oregon "clear and unquestionable" he felt that we would be bound to accept the forty-ninth degree boundary if England offered it.[12] When the issue was settled general satisfaction was expressed in North Carolina.[13] Quite naturally the matter had not excited as widespread interest throughout the state as had the issue of the annexation of Texas.

In May, 1846, a great patriotic gathering was held in Raleigh to give expression of support to the Mexican War. The *Standard* stated "we never saw so large or so enthusiastic a meeting of the citizens of Raleigh upon any occasion or upon any subject." The newspaper continued by declaring, "the people of all parties are sound in this cause." This latter statement, evidently written under the spell of enthusiasm, was soon to be recanted, for while the Democrats supported the war the Whigs were not long in manifesting a different attitude. Governor Graham's message to the General Assembly in November, 1846, condemned the Mexican War as unconstitutional. The Whigs of the state followed the party leaders in the opinion that the war was unconstitutionally brought on by President Polk. Realizing that a policy of non-support of the war would be injurious to the party, the Whigs assumed the attitude of assisting their country because she had gotten into a difficulty which should have been avoided. When a bill was introduced into the legislature to appropriate $10,000 to equip and transport troops, raised in North Carolina, to the points where they were to be mustered into the United States Army, the Whigs made clear their position in the preamble to the bill. The preamble began with the clause, "Whereas by the action of the Executive and the subsequent sanction of Congress, this Republic is involved in a foreign war." The Democrats fought this obnoxious preamble, but they were in the minority in the General Assembly and consequently unable to make any change. Ten years later when the Democrats had gained control of the legislature the preamble was ordered to be expunged from the journals of the House.

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[12] Louis D. Henry to David S. Reid, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. II (1845-50).

[13] Samuel F. Adams to David S. Reid, *ibid.*

Most of the North Carolina volunteers for the military service were Democrats. In spite of this fact Governor Graham appointed as the two leading officers of the regiments Whigs who had not volunteered for the service. The Governor furthermore disregarded the wishes of the Democrats in the selection of other officers.[14] Such acts caused considerable discontent in the companies, and Graham was bitterly condemned by the Democrats. As the war came to a close the question of territorial expansion and extension of slavery began to threaten the position assumed by the Whigs on the war issue. When the Wilmot Proviso was made a political issue in the state, the Democrats were clearly in a position to add strength to their cause.

It was not unnatural that the Whig party in North Carolina should have hesitated in giving expression on the Wilmot Proviso. A breach had developed between the northern and the southern divisions of the party that was especially embarrassing to the southern Whigs. The *Raleigh Register* finally took the position that the issue of the Proviso should be raised above the plane of party divisions and the whole of the South should unite in opposing any move that would culminate in the violation of the Missouri Compromise.[15] The Whig senator, George E. Badger, attempted to avoid the issue by opposing any move on the part of the national government that looked toward acquiring territory from the Mexican government.[16] The Whig state convention in 1848 reënforced Badger's position by declaring opposition to our government's taking by force any part of the territory belonging to Mexico.[17] Such attitudes on the part of the Whig leaders gave the Democrats an opportunity to argue with some force that the Whigs in the state had aligned themselves with the opponents of Southern Rights. After the adoption of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Democrats renewed with vigor their attacks on the Wilmot Proviso and began an agitation in favor of throwing open to slavery all the territory acquired from Mexico. A number of counties throughout the state took the matter up in county meetings, and a correspondent to the *Standard* suggested that a non-partisan state convention should be called to define "fully and finally the position of North Carolina in relation to the Wilmot Proviso."[18] The *Register* opposed this move, and the characteristic *Standard-Register* controversy ensued. The controversies of these newspapers on various phases of the slavery question continued through 1850. By this date, however, the tone of the *Register* had been sufficiently modified to cause the *Standard* to comment, "The Register has improved very much of late on the slavery question, yet it is still far from being right. It gives a good pail of milk, and then kicks it over."[19] As a matter of fact the difference between the papers on the slavery issue was more artificial than real. It was difficult for the *Register* to come to open agreement in an uncompromising manner on any issue strongly advocated by the *Standard*.

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[14] Hamilton, *Party Politics*, p. 111.

[15] *Raleigh Register*, February 28, 1847.

[16] *Congressional Globe*, March 23, 1847. Badger's "unsound" views on slavery came to be a matter of paramount concern with the *Standard*. In addition to numerous editorials on his stand on the slavery issue, a series of articles over the signature "A Slaveholder" were addressed to the Senator in 1849.

[17] *Raleigh Register*, February 26, 1848.

By 1850 quite a number of the Whig papers in the state were in full agreement with the *Standard* on the slavery issue.[20] In view of such agreement there was some manifestation of a desire to lay aside party spirit and organize upon the grounds of a defense of southern rights and southern institutions. The *Wilmington Journal* in reply to such a suggestion stated that it had always been the policy of the Democratic party to oppose the interference of the national government in local institutions and that, in view of this, those who desired to support southern rights would find themselves in a position to do so consistently as members of the Democratic party.[21]

The Whigs seized upon the compromise measures of 1850 with the hope that the slavery and sectional differences would be adjusted by the measures. At first a majority of the members of the Democratic party in North Carolina opposed the measures, considering the concessions to be made by the South as not being counterbalanced by the benefits that might be received by a strengthening of the fugitive slave law. Democratic resolutions were introduced in the General Assembly expressing opposition to the whole compromise plan,[22] but a number of the conservative Democrats joined with the Whigs in defeating the measure. As agitation over the measures continued, it came to be evident that public opinion in North Carolina favored the compromise measures as acceptable in lieu of the graver danger of secession.[23] Some of the leading Democratic newspapers, including the *North Carolina Standard,* the *Goldsborough Patriot,* the *Fayetteville North Carolinian,* and the *Wilmington Journal* announced their acceptance of the measures. The *Journal* stated:

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[18] *Standard,* September 12, 1849.

[19] *Ibid.,* February 6, 1850.

[20] *Ibid.,* November 21, 1849.

[21] *Wilmington Journal,* March 29, 1850.

> Perhaps this compromise is not all that Southern men could desire. In some respects it is not; but we believe the question is now narrowed down to this—compromise or disunion. There is no use in deceiving ourselves. . . . To sum up all, this report and the bills accompanying it will be vehemently opposed by gentlemen from the extremes of both sections; but we think that it will finally pass, and with some slight modifications, will be, if not acceptable, at least acquiesced in by the people of the country.[24]

The controversy over the compromise measures of 1850 led directly into a more serious consideration of the possibility of secession than had hitherto existed in North Carolina. Both political parties in the state were divided on the issue, there being a Democratic minority opposing secession and Whig minority favoring the policy. An indication of this division was given during the session of the General Assembly of 1850-51 when a joint committee, which had been appointed to consider the question of slavery, made its report. A majority report of the committee favored acquiescence in the compromise measures of 1850, and a minority report advanced a strong plea for the right of secession. The reports elicited a prolonged and heated debate. William B. Shepard, who had reported for the minority of the committee, took the lead in upholding the right of secession and was ably supported by a number of his Democratic colleagues. The more conservative Democrats opposed the report on secession not so much on the grounds of opposition to the doctrine of secession as in support of the belief that the resolutions were inexpedient at that time.[25]

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[22] *House Journal,* 1850-51.

[23] *Standard,* May 22, 1850.

[24] *Wilmington Journal,* May 17, 1850.

The North Carolina newspapers entered fully into the secession controversy. As usual, leadership in the discussions was assumed by the *Standard* and the *Register*. Yet it must not be supposed that all the newspapers of the state followed the lead of the Raleigh papers. For example, the *Wilmington Journal* disagreed with its Democratic contemporary, the *Standard,* and took the conservative view of the secession issue. In the early part of October, 1850, the *Journal* stated, "We have observed the current of events as carefully as any one could do—more coolly, we believe, than most—and the conviction has been irresistibly pressed upon us that no single state, with the exception, perhaps, of South Carolina, is prepared for dissolution."[26] Such a conviction, however, was far from being acceptable to Editor Holden of the *Standard*. One might have judged North Carolina fully ready for the fatal step of secession if Holden's editorials had been accepted as the criterion of political opinion in the state. During the critical years of 1849, 1850, and 1851, the *Standard* was filled with arguments justifying secession, predictions regarding the inevitable crisis, and appeals to the South to organize and assert herself. The following extract will serve to illustrate the attitude of this aggressive editor:

> The South has been driven back, inch by inch, on this question until she now stands with her back to the wall. She acquiesces in what has been done, because she is devoted to the Union as it ought to be, and because she still hopes (how faint a hope!) for better feelings and better times. She acquiesces also, because she has been heretofore divided in her own councils, as to the mode and measure of redress; but she will acquiesce and retreat no longer. This is no threat—it is a fact. What she has to say to the free States in this: Let this question of Slavery alone—take it out and keep it out of Con-

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[25] *Raleigh Daily Register,* January 3, 1851.

[26] *Wilmington Journal,* October 4, 1850.

> gress; and respect and enforce the Fugitive Slave Law as it stands. If not, WE LEAVE YOU! Before God and man—in the presence of the nations, and with a wise reference to the interests of posterity—if you fail in this simple act of justice, THE BONDS WILL BE DISSOLVED! The Anglo-Saxon blood will, if necessary establish and confirm it. We assume to ourselves no right to speak for this State—she will speak for herself at the proper time; but we have no hesitation in expressing the opinion that this is the language of a majority of FIFTY THOUSAND of her citizens.[27]

There is little doubt regarding the sincerity of Holden in his stand on secession. On December 1, 1850, he wrote David S. Reid expressing the opinion that the Union faced dissolution and "nothing but the providence of God, which guided and shielded Washington" would be able to save it.[28] When North Carolina received the invitation of Mississippi to meet in a southern convention to be held in Nashville for the purpose of emphasizing the demands of the South, Holden took up the call with fervor. He insisted that the convention was "of first importance to the South and the Union, and North Carolina ought, by all means, to be represented in it."[29] A few meetings were held in various parts of the state, with the purpose of having a representation from North Carolina in the convention. The two largest and most enthusiastic of these meetings were held in Charlotte and Wilmington.[30] But no official action was taken in the state on the matter with the result that North Carolina was not represented in the convention. The meeting in Charlotte, true to the character of "Old Mecklenburg," who always asserted her freedom just a little previously to the rest of the country, passed a resolution declaring, "That the States composing the federal Union are free and independent sovereignties; that they may and of right should exercise all the rights of separate, distinct, and independent commonwealths, whenever the protection of the Federal Government is withdrawn, or in the wisdom of the people wronged. . . ."[31]

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[27] *Standard*, November 13, 1850.

[28] W. W. Holden to David S. Reid, December 1, 1850, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. III (1850-56).

[29] *Standard*, January 16, 1850.

[30] *Ibid.*, November 13, 1850; February 13, 1850.

[31] *Ibid.*, November 13, 1850.

Notwithstanding the fact that the various controversies centering about slavery caused some friction in the Democratic party in North Carolina, there can be little doubt that the party profited by the controversies. For one thing, disagreement within the party was not sufficiently strong to cause it to lose any strength at the polls because of the issue, while the sectional nature of the issues was such as to bind the party together in greater bonds of loyalty in many places. Furthermore the Whigs *did* lose strength because of the stand taken by their leaders on the issue. For example, the leading Whig of the mountain district, Thomas L. Clingman, was a strong supporter of Southern Rights and advocated secession as a means of resisting the aggression of the North.[32] Senator George E. Badger, who was one of the most influential Whigs in North Carolina, took the leadership in expressing conservative views on slavery and secession. It was his opinion that Congress had full power over slavery in the territories and that a state had no constitutional right to secede.[33] Such views gave the Democrats grounds for caustic criticism and resulted in splitting the Whigs into Badger and Clingman factions. Clingman's views ultimately carried him into the Democratic party, a move that assisted in bringing disaster to the Whig party in the state.[34]

THE TARIFF ISSUE

The tariff of 1842 was a Whig measure which had been made to satisfy the protectionists. The Democrats opposed the measure, and during the campaigns of 1844 tariff revision was an important issue with the party. In North Carolina, Henry Clay, the Whig candidate for president, was quoted as having said that he would regard the repeal or modification of the tariff of 1842 as "a great national calamity."[35] "What!" asked the *Standard,* "a 'great national calamity' to take off the restrictions from trade to relieve the farmer—to give some slight hope of prosperity to the trampled and suffering South? A 'great national calamity' to decrease the taxes of the people? . . . Ah, it would be a great calamity to the vampires who are drinking the life-blood of Southern and Western industry!"[36]

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[32] *Raleigh Register,* November 14, 1848; *Congressional Globe,* 31st Congress, First Session, p. 389.

[33] H. M. Wagstaff, *State Rights and Political Parties in North Carolina, 1776-1861,* pp. 82-83.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] *Standard,* October 2, 1844.

The presidential candidate of the Democratic party, James K. Polk, avowed his opposition to a protective tariff, and due publicity was given to this fact in the South. When Polk was elected and it was known that both branches of Congress would be Democratic, agitation was renewed in North Carolina on the tariff issue. The *Wilmington Journal* called upon the "brethren of the Democratic press to urge the matter in season and out of season."[37] Personal appeals to congressmen were added to the demands of the newspapers in the matter. Among several such appeals received by the Democratic congressman, David S. Reid, the following illustrates how closely many North Carolinians were watching Congress on the matter of the tariff:

> I hope you will do all you can for the repeal of the present odious tariff; for it does seem to me that if any man with common reason will read the President's message & the treasurer's report on that subject & will not desire its repeal [he] must be . . . blinded by prejudice—in other words a fool or a grand rascal.[38]

James I. McKay, who was one of the most prominent of the Democratic congressmen from North Carolina, assumed leadership in Congress in bringing about a revision of the tariff of 1842. His position as chairman of the committee on ways and means, as well as his ability and industry, assured him of the confidence and coöperation of his Democratic colleagues in his work. In 1844 he had attempted a revision of the 1842 bill but did not succeed in getting through a satisfactory measure. In 1846, with a Democratic Congress and administration backing him, McKay helped to prepare a tariff bill that was in keeping with Democratic principles in that sharp reductions were made in the protective features of the tariff of 1842. This bill, known as the Walker bill,[39] succeeded in passing the House without much difficulty, but when it reached the Senate it was understood that the vote on the bill would be a very close one.

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[36] *Standard.*

[37] *Wilmington Journal,* August 29, 1845.

[38] Weldon E. Wright to David S. Reid, December 24, 1845, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. II (1845-50).

In the face of this uncertainty it became known that William H. Haywood, Jr., the Democratic Senator representing North Carolina, would not support the tariff measure. Considerable effort was made to cause Haywood to change his attitude. President Polk, who had been a close friend to him since the time when both men were students in the University of North Carolina, did all within his power to induce the Senator to vote for the bill and not resign his seat.[40] Congressman Asa Biggs, who, while a member of the General Assembly, had assisted in electing Haywood to the Senate, had an "animated and excited conversation" with the Senator regarding the matter, which only resulted in a break in the friendship of the two men.[41] Others attempted to influence Haywood to give his vote for the Walker bill, but he was fixed in his purpose and resigned from the United States Senate rather than support the measure.

Expressions of condemnation and commendation followed Haywood's resignation. The Whigs were elated and the Democrats disappointed and indignant. Speeches were made regarding the matter in the Senate by Senators Webster, Benton, Dix, Bagby, Crittenden, and Archer, and in the House by Congressmen Biggs, Reid, Dobbin, and Dockery. Biggs and Reid were especially severe in their criticism of the action of Haywood, while Webster took leadership among the Whigs in expressing admiration for the course pursued by the North Carolina Senator.[42] The event also brought forth a storm of newspaper criticism. The *Washington* (D. C.) *Union* led in a bitter attack on Haywood, giving expression to such condemnation as the following:

> The fate of the measure . . . essentially depended upon the course of Mr. Haywood. But in vain was every appeal made

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[39] The name "Walker" was given to the bill in honor of Robert J. Walker, Secretary of the Treasury, who coöperated with McKay in preparing the bill.

[40] *Diary of James K. Polk,* II, 48-49.

[41] *Autobiography,* p. 10.

[42] *Standard,* August 5, 1846.

> to him by his most intimate friends. In vain had six Democratic representatives of North Carolina borne witness, by their votes to the policy and justice of the measure. In vain is it understood that the democratic party of North Carolina, and many of the Whigs, are in favor of the reduction of the tariff to the revenue standard. In vain was Wm. H. Haywood sent to the Senate of the United States by the democracy of North Carolina. At this time of the utmost need—whilst the fate of the bill may depend upon his vote—whilst the incalculable interests of the great country are dependent upon his vote—he flinches from his duty—betrays his State—and this day resigns his seat in the Senate of the United States, and puts it into the power of a whig governor to send a whig senator to arrest the passage of a measure, which is to do justice to the south, to the west, to the whole agricultural and commercial interests of the north, and to every portion of the Union.[43]

The Democratic newspapers in North Carolina were no less hesitant than had been the *Union* in repudiating Haywood. As might be expected, however, the Whig newspapers came to his rescue. The *Raleigh Register* characterized him as a victim of the "duress of party drill."[44] The *Fayetteville Observer* was lavish in its praise of the superior worth of the young Senator and stated it was evident that he "felt deeply that the abominable tariff bill, concocted by conceited Ignorance and blind Passion, was full of evil, and would be fatal to the prosperity of the Country and to the ascendancy of his party."[45] The *Raleigh Star* surpassed the other Whig papers in North Carolina in feigning a sense of indignation over the manner in which the Democrats in the state had received Haywood's resignation. For example, the following editorial is calculated to give the impression that the North Carolina Democrats were a rather heartless group:

> Here at his own home, even amongst those of his political friends who had received favors at his hands, and who had made him their political instrument for years past, Mr. Haywood met with a degree of vituperation, unparalleled in almost any community.—All this was done too before any opportunity is given him, to expose the reason by which he had been gov-

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[43] *Washington Union,* quoted from the *Standard,* July 29, 1846.

[44] *Raleigh Register,* August 28, 1846.

[45] *Fayetteville Observer,* August 4, 1846.

> erned. "Faithlessness"—"treason to his Party"—"Corruption," "Bribery," flew through the streets, and were caught by the rank and file with apparent avidity and eagerness! With some no motive was too base to attribute to him. All this came from men, who but a short time since, looked up to Mr. Haywood, as the great leader of their Party in North Carolina! That very press, the "Standard," which but a few weeks before had heaped upon him the most extravagant praises, was quick to denounce him, as faithless to his Party, faithless to his State, faithless to the South and faithless to his country![46]

There is no doubt that the Democrats were through with Haywood. The *Standard* insisted that "the sooner he comes out openly for the Whigs the better."[47] A county meeting in Northampton County passed the following rather severe censure:

> Resolved, That it was with mortification and regret, deep and unaffected, we heard of the desertion of William H. Haywood, Jr., in the hour of greatest peril, and when it was not certain but that the result of the great Tariff contest was dependent upon his conduct; and we regard it a shameful dereliction of duty, deserving our unqualified censure and severest judgment; and we esteem such sickly sentimentality and delicate conscientiousness, by which it is assigned he was governed, unsuited in all public men for great and moving trials, and undeserving the reliance of a pure and just people engaged in the reformation of the great national errors.[48]

Several explanations have been offered in the attempt to understand the motives that caused Haywood to take the step that ended his political career. President Polk, in his diary, makes the following analysis of the "error" of his friend:

> He is, I think, ambitious, and had probably a desire to have some participation or authorship in effecting the contemplated tariff reform. From some feeling of this sort, and without due reflection, I conjecture, he took ground against the tariff bill, and, having committed himself, was too proud in spirit, when he found himself separated from all his friends, and that none of them would go with him, to recede. He is, moreover, nervous.

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[46] *Raleigh Star,* August 5, 1846.

[47] *Standard,* August 12, 1846.

[48] *Ibid.,* August 26, 1846.

> and in an excited state, no doubt, tendered his resignation. I give not the slightest heed to the painful insinuations which I learned this evening are made by illiberal persons as to the motives and causes which have induced his course. I differ with him in my opinion and think that he has erred in his resigning, but that he has done so from good motives and from the causes stated above I little doubt.[49]

After his resignation, Haywood offered an explanation of his course in a lengthy address to the people of North Carolina. In this address he justified his objection to the Walker bill on the grounds that: (1) the Mexican war had made it necessary for the United States to have a high tariff in order to meet her war debt; (2) the new tariff was to be put into operation before a reasonable public notice was given; (3) the tariff, when taken with other measures that were to have serious effect on industry, would work a revolution in American finances; (4) certain manufacturing interests of the United States were discriminated against by the measure; and (5) the new duties should not be levied ad valorem but at the value of the market from whence the goods came. In concluding his letter, Haywood explained that, before resigning, he had obtained the certain knowledge that Jarnagin (Whig) of Tennessee would vote for the tariff, and in case of a tie he had been certain that the Vice-President would vote in favor of the measure—so he felt assured that he was in no sense betraying his party in exercising his right of resignation.[50] The *Standard* followed Haywood's letter with a very lengthy critical discussion, occupying a total of eleven columns in the issues of September 2, 9, and 16. In the end neither Haywood's explanation nor the *Standard's* criticisms did much to influence the public mind—Haywood's act had determined his political destiny.

The Walker tariff was accepted in North Carolina as a Democratic victory, and after the excitement of the Haywood incident had subsided, little more was heard on the question of tariff for many years. Congressman David S. Reid, in giving an account of his stewardship to his constituency in 1847, ex-

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[49] *The Diary of James K. Polk,* II, 48-49.

[50] *Standard,* August 26, 1846.

expressed perhaps the opinion of most Democrats on the tariff of 1846 in the following statement:

> After a hard struggle we succeeded in passing the act of 1846. It is not to be expected that this act is perfect, and it may, from time to time, require such slight modifications as experience or a change of circumstances may suggest; but upon the whole the act of 1846 may be considered as favorable to the agricultural classes as any tariff that has been in operation since the principle of protection has been seriously urged in this country. The predictions of the opponents of this act, that it would fail to produce revenue—that it would break down domestic manufactures— . . . have . . . proved to be fallacious.[51]

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS

The attitude of opposition taken by Andrew Jackson on the problem of internal improvements by the national government had been accepted by North Carolina Democrats as the party policy on the question. So long as the politics of the state centered about national issues, the position assumed by the Democratic party on the matter gave little cause for division within the party rank. When, however, there began to appear on the part of the political leaders an interest in local affairs, the question of internal improvements by state aid commenced to give the party trouble. The rank and file of the Democrats, being naturally conservative, especially on the matter of paying taxes, readily took the same position on the issue of internal improvements by state aid that they had adhered to when confronted by the national policy. But many of the party leaders were anxious to enter into a program that would bring economic and social progress in the state. Furthermore a number of prominent Democrats in North Carolina had invested in projects of internal improvements[52] and were evidently anxious to have their investments augmented by governmental backing.

While a few articles appeared in the *Standard* before 1844 expressing a favorable attitude towards internal improvements by state aid, the Democratic organ was by no means committed to the doctrine at that time, for on the whole the policy of the paper up to 1848 indicates an opposition to expenditure of state funds in support of such undertakings. The *Standard* was especially critical of the railroad developments supported by the Whig legislature between 1843 and 1847. The following editorial published in 1844 is typical of a great number of such statements issued by the Democratic newspapers at that time:

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[51] David S. Reid to his Constituency, March 31, 1847, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. II (1845-50).

[52] *Raleigh Register,* July 14, 1846.

> The people cannot shut their eyes to the fact that the Whigs have plunged the State in debt hundreds of thousands of dollars; that one hundred and eighty-nine thousand dollars have already been paid for Rail Roads; and that the next Legislature will have to provide at least one hundred and fifty thousand dollars more to pay off Rail Road debts. For proof of that we may see the letter of the Public Treasurer, published in the last Standard. People of North Carolina, This is The Result of a Whig Legislature. How do you like it? Will you have more of it? Will you put men in power who thank you for your votes by buckling burdens on your backs? Do you want to be ground to the earth by direct taxes? Do you wish to pay additional taxes on your land and your negroes, in order that your Whig Representatives in the Legislature may have the pleasure of voting to sustain insolvent corporations?[53]

In September, 1844, the *Standard* opposed its Democratic contemporary, the *Fayetteville North Carolinian,* because of certain internal improvement plans advocated by the latter paper. The following statement leaves little doubt regarding where the Raleigh paper stood on the issue at that time:

> We are opposed to any increase of our State Debt, and so we believe the Democratic party are and will be. Every item augmenting the State Debt, no matter for what purpose will plunge us into still deeper difficulties. The principal is too large now—we do not wish to see interest paid on interest, until it absorbs the entire revenues of the State.[54]

During the years 1845, 1846, and 1847 the *Standard* maintained a consistent attitude of hostility to the extravagance of internal improvements by state aid. In view of this it is not difficult to imagine that many a Democrat in North Carolina rubbed his eyes and took a second long gaze of amazement at his party organ on November 8, 1848, for the *Standard* of that date carried an editorial that asked this startling question: "Is it not high time that we all wake up to the importance of doing something for North Carolina in the way of internal improvements?" The editorial presented an eloquent plea advocating that party differences and past prejudices be forgotten and that all unite in making North Carolina "what she ought to be and what she is capable of being rendered, by the joint efforts and united energies of all her sons." In the same issue of the paper there was begun, over the signature "Yadkin," a series of articles advocating a progressive scheme of internal improvements. Needless to state, there was considerable resentment on the part of many Democrats because of the position taken by their party newspaper. Holden confessed that his position was a "most delicate and difficult one" and that all the experience that he had acquired during the six years of his editorship would be necessary to reconcile the friends of the paper and at the same time present such opinions on state affairs as would accomplish good and yet prevent division in the party ranks.[55]

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[53] *Standard,* July 24, 1844.

[54] *Ibid.,* September 18, 1844.

One of the chief influences that brought Editor Holden to a frank support of internal improvements by state aid may be found in an unusual development concerning such issues which took place in the General Assembly of 1848-49. This General Assembly opened with a unique message from the Governor—a message that departed from the traditions of its predecessors in being devoted entirely to state affairs. In a forceful and effective manner Governor Graham argued for internal improvements. He gave definiteness to his appeal by outlining certain projects, including principally a plan for a railroad that would run from Raleigh to Charlotte by way of Salisbury. A bill embodying the Governor's railroad plan was introduced early in the session of the legislature but made no progress, partly because of a conflict with another bill known as the Danville Connection scheme. The Danville scheme was introduced by a prominent Democrat, John W. Ellis, and appealed especially to the Democrats because this undertaking would be financed entirely by the Charlotte and South Carolina Railroad, the company desiring from the legislature only a "naked" charter. Edward Stanly, a prominent Whig, took the lead in the House of Commons in opposing the Danville Connection scheme, giving as his objection the argument that, inasmuch as this railroad would cross North Carolina and connect with the South Carolina and Virginia railroads, the project would result in draining North Carolina for the benefit of her sister states.

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[55] *Standard,* February 7, 1849.

While the legislature was apparently fast approaching a deadlock over the railroad issue, the question of establishing a state hospital for the insane was introduced. The introduction of this measure was of unusual importance because the move resulted in creating a favorable reaction toward the whole scheme of internal improvements. Miss Dorothy Dix, one of the pioneers in the work promoting humane care of the insane, appeared before the legislature and made an appeal for the establishment of a state hospital for the insane. A bill was introduced but failed to pass its second reading. The measure perhaps would have received no further consideration from the General Assembly of 1848-49 had it not been for an unusual occurrence. James C. Dobbin, a Democratic member of the House of Commons, fresh from the deathbed of his wife with a promise that he would fight for the establishment of the hospital, made a plea for the cause that was irresistible.[56] The measure passed the House by a vote of 101 to 10 and subsequently passed the Senate without difficulty.

Having made the plunge for progress by the passage of the bill providing for the state hospital for the insane, the members of the General Assembly now found themselves in a responsive mood for constructive work along many lines. A great number of bills was introduced, but for a time no one appeared bold enough to attempt to champion the railroad system. Finally William S. Ashe, a Democratic senator from New Hanover

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[56] Rufus Barringer, *History of the North Carolina Railroad*, p. 17.

County, formulated a bill providing for a railroad from some point on the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad to Charlotte, which would be supported by the state's subscribing for $2,000,000 of the required $3,000,000 capital. Shortly after the introduction of the Ashe bill, John W. Ellis was elected to a judgeship, and the Danville Connection scheme was left without a strong champion. At this juncture Rufus Barringer, a Whig, challenged Stanly to offer a bill that had any possibilities of passing the legislature in lieu of the Danville Connection scheme and promised that the partisans of the Danville project would support such a measure. Stanly sprang to his feet and holding up the Ashe bill stated he would pledge himself and his friends to that bill if Barringer would do the same. Barringer assented and the Ashe bill was presented.[57] Two amendments, providing for the relief of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad and the opening of the Neuse River from Waynesboro to New Bern, were added to the bill, which passed in the House, after a temporary defeat, by a vote of sixty to fifty-two. When the bill came before the senate, its supporters entertained grave doubts regarding its fate, as will be indicated by the following vivid account given by Rufus Barringer:

> The chances in the Senate were all in doubt. That body was Democratic; and up to this time, no special effort had been made to draw the old ship from its Jeffersonian moorings. And such men as Henry W. Connor, John H. Drake, A. B. Hawkins, John Berry, George Bower, W. D. Bethel, George W. Thompson, and John Walker were hard to lead and could not be driven. And above them all sat Speaker Calvin Graves, a recognized force from a county just under the nose of Danville, and devoted to Richmond. The speaker was tall, angular, and singularly ugly in feature; but his character was high; he was strictly impartial, and with all courtesy in bearing. From the first to the last no one could divine a leaning either way. But now a mighty effort was made to teach these born men of the plow and of the people a new tenet of republican faith, an awakening to what the State owed the public. Judge Romulus M. Saunders and W. W. Holden both stepped forward and made strong appeals for the new departure. But all to no purpose. And then some of the Whigs, left out by the Ashe bill, stood

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[57] Rufus Barringer, *History of the North Carolina Railroad,* p. 15.

aloof. From these and other causes, it was seen from day to day, in all the preliminary skirmishes, as also in the final struggle, the result would be very close, and that all might hang on the "Baptist Enigma," Calvin Graves.

By consent, the first and second readings were chiefly formal, to get the measure in shape, and to secure all sides and parties a just showing. This was after the old style, quite North Carolina way, when, as a hundred years before, Dissenters and Churchmen were alike honoring King, Queen and Royal Governor by naming towns, counties and mountain peaks after them, but at the same time, solemnly resolved to hurl them instantly from power "if they did not do exactly the fair thing." So here, every courtesy was shown opposing parties and interests until January 25, when the bill came regularly up, after full debate, and was put on its third and final reading. The Senate Chamber was packed with visitors and strangers from all quarters to see the fate of the momentous struggle, now so full of weal or woe to the dear "Old North State," and which might settle here once for all the mighty effort to awaken North Carolina from the long sleep of her death-like "Rip-Van-Winkleism."

Speaker Graves calmly announced: "The bill to charter the North Carolina Railroad Company and for other purposes is now upon its third reading. Is the Senate ready for the question?" Feeble responses said, "Question." The roll call began; and as feared nearly every Democrat voted "No." The tally was kept by hundreds, and when the clerk announced 22 yeas and 22 nays, there was an awful silence. The slender form of Speaker Graves stood up, and leaning slightly forward, with gavel in hand, he said: "The vote on the bill being equal, 22 yeas and 22 nays, the chair votes 'Yea.' The bill has passed its third and last reading."[58]

The hospital and railroad bills opened the way for the passage of quite a number of internal improvements measures by the General Assembly of 1848-49. There is no doubt that a majority of the Democratic members presented passive opposition to most of the projects. On the other hand, such leaders as Saunders, Holden, Ashe, Dobbin, and Graves did much to make the passage of these measures possible.

The *Wilmington Journal* attempted to show that party lines were forgotten in the work. According to this newspaper

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[58] Rufus Barringer, *History of the North Carolina Railroad*, pp. 16-18.

"Whigs and Democrats . . . emulated each other in a glorious effort for the redemption of the State from the thraldom of indolence, supineness, and inactivity.'[59] Such a statement was more nearly a true characterization of the activities of certain leaders than it was of the parties as a whole.

The Democratic newspapers throughout North Carolina received the internal improvements measures of the General Assembly in a surprisingly liberal manner. Of the eleven Democratic papers in the state at that time, eight expressed themselves in favor of the work.[60] The subscribers of the papers were by no means unanimous in their agreement with the approval expressed by their editors, as has already been shown in the discussion of the attitude of the *Standard* on the issue.[61] Other examples of such disapproval might be cited, as for instance in the complaint of the *Hillsboro Democrat,* which stated: "We have had the misfortune to differ with our friends on the subject, and we are fearful that our advocacy of what we honestly believed to be of the greatest benefit to them and to the state, has caused no little coolness of feeling toward us."[62] The full effects of the reaction of the people was felt in the legislature of 1850-51, a body that has been characterized as the most illiberal on internal improvements known in the history of that issue in the state.[63] The *Wilmington Journal* stated that no reasonable man could be disappointed with the inaction of the legislature of 1850-51, as the reaction arising from the large appropriations of 1848-49 was inevitable.[64] However, the reaction was temporary, for the Democratic party was destined to accept the doctrine of state support of internal improvements and to assist materially in the progress of the state by liberal support to important enterprises.

FREE AND EQUAL SUFFRAGE

Reference has already been made to the early agitation favoring the removal of the property qualification that was required by the Constitution of North Carolina as a prerequisite for voting in the election of state senators.[65] At first, little interest and only a limited amount of comment was created in the state concerning the matter, but in 1848, David S. Reid, the Democratic candidate for governor, made the question one of paramount importance in the politics of the state by introducing it as the major issue of his campaign. Reid called his proposal "free suffrage," a title that proved to have unusual campaign advantages. It has often been stated that Stephen A. Douglas suggested to Reid the political possibilities of stressing the suffrage issue in North Carolina. Douglas, whose wife was related to Reid, made occasional visits to North Carolina and may have, while discussing political matters with Reid, "singled out the 'fifty acre qualification' for voters for the Senate as a text on which a proper leader could carry all before him."[66] Yet there is no sufficient reason to substantiate the statement that the free suffrage issue was introduced into North Carolina politics on the suggestion of Douglas, for Douglas himself denies this,[67] and, as we have already seen, the issue had been discussed in the state previously to its introduction in 1848. There is no doubt that the full responsibility for the injection of the suffrage issue into the campaign of 1848 belonged to Reid. The convention which nominated him did so without his knowledge or consent and made no mention of the question that was destined to become a leading issue in the state for nearly a decade. It had been Reid's intention to attend the convention and urge the adoption of free suffrage as a party issue, but ill health prevented this.[68] Perhaps it is well that he alone was responsible for the issue, as it is doubtful whether the Democratic convention of 1848 would have accepted it—at least there is some evidence that there would have been a division on the matter, for when Reid made known his intentions on the question there was division among the party leaders, some fearing that the wealthy Democrats of the East would be estranged.[69]

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[59] *Wilmington Journal,* February 9, 1849.

[60] *Standard,* February 14, 1849. [61] See *supra,* p. 126.

[62] Quoted in the *Standard,* February 21, 1849.

[63] *Raleigh Star,* February 5, 1851.

[64] *Wilmington Journal,* February 7, 1851.

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[65] See *supra*, pp. 49-50.

[66] Barringer, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[67] Hamilton, *Party Politics*, p. 118.

[68] *Standard*, July 6, 1850.

[69] J. S. Bassett, *Suffrage in the State of North Carolina*, pp. 281-82.

The question of free suffrage as a serious campaign issue came as a complete surprise to both parties. The Whig leaders rejected it as a "demagogical cry" which had been proposed "with the hope that by the popular enthusiasm which its promulgation may occasion, advantage may enure to the person or party proposing it, without once having the most remote idea of pushing it on to its final consummation."[70] The Whig newspapers were practically unanimous in opposing the "new innovation," the *Raleigh Register,* the *Raleigh Star,* and the *Wilmington Commercial* being especially bitter in their attacks. The *Star* in a labored article stated its opposition to free suffrage because of the following six reasons: (1) It was an attack upon the constitution "in a desperate game" to promote party and personal ambition. (2) It proposed a useless change of the constitution which the people did not want and which could not be effected without heavy expense. (3) The doctrine of unrestricted suffrage was dangerous in that it took the management of public affairs out of the hands of the sober, settled, and experienced, and placed the government "at the hazard of being controlled by unprincipled and designing demagogues." (4) "It would be rank injustice to those who have acquired by hard labor or otherwise a freehold—a home for themselves and families—to place this dearest of all earthly possessions entirely at the mercy of the indolent, transient, and non-landholding portion of the community, whether rich or poor, who form a majority together of two-thirds of the voters." (5) "All innovations upon well established usages are hazardous, and should never be made unless they become burdensome, or have clearly produced evil. In the case under consideration no burdens have been felt; no evil has arisen; no complaints have been uttered." (6) The doctrine of free suffrage if pushed to its logical conclusion would mean that the people should elect all officers, national and state, which would be both unwise and unnecessary.[71]

One point of attack reiterated by the Whigs more than all others was the accusation that the issue had been introduced purely as a political trick. The *Elizabeth City North State*, the *Fayetteville Observer*, and the *Raleigh Register* made capital of the fact that Reid had served several times as a member of the General Assembly and had made no move in favor of free suffrage while a member of that body. Reid answered this accusation in a straightforward manner with the following statement:

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[70] *Raleigh Register,* May 27, 1848.

[71] *Raleigh Star,* May 24, 1848.

> That some men are permitted to vote for the Senate and others are not, was no new discovery to me or to any body else. At any rate, I well remember my attention was directed to the inequality and injustice of this feature of our Constitution even before I became a voter; and I presume there are but few men in the State who could not say as much. My attention was frequently called to the subject when a Candidate for the Senate, by persons who desired to vote for me, but expressed a regret that they could not do so for the want of the land qualification. Many years ago, while a member of the Legislature, I determined at one time to present the subject to the consideration of that body, but met with no encouragement from those to whom I communicated my intention. Occupying an humble position and possessing but little influence, I was fearful that a failure then might prove prejudicial to this question of Constitutional Reform, which, I believed, I could at some day convince the people, they ought to adopt.[72]

Such appellations as "agrarianism," "demagogary," "levelling innovation," and "Jacobinism" were freely used by the Whigs in an attempt to discredit their adversaries. Occasionally their arguments bordered on amusing absurdity, as will be illustrated by the following warning from the *Wilmington Commercial*:

> Among the measures which follow in the train of "free suffrage," or rather among those which are advocated by the movers of this scheme, is the desecration of the Bible and the abolition of Matrimony. This is the consummation so ardently desired, by Jacobins in politics and levellers in sociology; they go hand in hand in the work; whatever restrains the passions, or curbs the ardor of political proscription, is hostile to the feelings and designs of both.
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> It is a distinguished feature in those monstrosities that while they assume the largest liberty for themselves they have the very smallest regard for the rights of others. The command

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[72] *Standard*, July 6, 1850.

> "Thou shalt not steal," comes in the way of the taxing the property of the land holders without his consent. "Thou shalt not covet," is adverse to the equal division of property. "Thou shalt not commit adultery," is against the abolition of matrimony, and the cherished licentiousness of the levellers; and "as ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them," scatters all the doctrines of the whole tribe to the winds. So that before this "progression" can be brought to its grand climacteric, the Bible must be put away, as behind the "spirit of the age," in its doctrines and admonitions.[73]

The fight of the Democrats for free suffrage was aggressive and enthusiastic. The very fact that the Whigs were exercising so much energy in opposing the measure gave new hope, but above all the Democrats had at last found a popular issue that they could support with a hope of winning strength for the party. There was in the whole movement a positive spirit of optimism that seemed to assume victory. Arguments that involved no technical or detailed elaboration could easily be presented. Reid opened his campaign with the following clear statement of his position:

> I have long believed that the freehold qualification of fifty acres of land, required of a voter for members of the State Senate, is wrong and ought to be abolished. I do not desire to interfere with the qualifications of voters for members of the House of Commons; but I desire to extend to every man qualified to vote for a member of one branch, the right to vote for members of both branches of the Legislature. This question is no innovation upon Democracy; but, on the contrary, equality in the exercise of suffrage among the free white men who are citizens of our State, is one of the first principles of Democracy. I do not propose to interfere with the present basis of representation, nor would I interfere with the qualifications required at present of a voter for members of the House of Commons; but I would put those voters upon an equality with the Senate voters in regard to the exercise of the right of suffrage.[74]

The proposition having been stated, the contest was on, and soon questions and arguments abounded. Did not the restriction mean that thousands of persons of intelligence and influence

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[73] *Wilmington Commercial,* quoted in the *Standard,* July 12, 1848.

[74] *Standard,* May 24, 1848.

DAVID S. REID

were being cheated out of a cardinal right of a democracy for no good reason? Was not North Carolina the only state in the Union with such a requirement? "What," asked the *Mecklenburg Jeffersonion,* "does such a restriction imply, if it be not that those who advocate its perpetuation tacitly assert that the masses of our people are less intelligent than those of any other state of our Union—less fitted to be trusted with their own government?"[75] "In all free governments," observed the *Standard,* "mind is the test of merit, and not property. Mind plans all, contrives all, and by the aid of capital, it achieves all. Let mind, then, the source of all we possess . . . hold chief sway in the public councils."[76]

As the campaign developed it became evident that the Democrats were gaining ground. Reid did excellent campaigning and Editor Holden put forth more than usual energy in behalf of the cause. The issue came so near bringing victory to the Democrats in 1848 that, when the contest was renewed in 1850, the Whigs decided to change their tactics and attempted to divert the attention of the public from the main issue by advocating the calling of a constitutional convention with a view to considering not only free suffrage but also popular election of judges and changing the basis of representation from federal to free white. This last proposition was used by the Whig candidate for governor in 1850 when he realized the danger of further direct opposition to the free suffrage movement. It was thought that such a change would be popular with the western Whigs as it would give them evident advantage over the East where the slave population was greater. However, the new tactics of the Whigs did not succeed in diverting the attention of the people from the main issue, and the Democrats were successful in the election of 1850.

After the elections the contest was renewed in the General Assembly. The measure had been presented to the legislature in 1849 but had been defeated by the Senate after having passed the House of Commons by more than the required three-fifths majority. At the meeting of the next General Assembly a special committee on the constitutional amendment rejected the election of judges and justices of the peace and a proposed amendment limiting the legislature in its appropriation of public money, but reported in favor of a free suffrage amendment by legislative action. The Whigs now confined their fight to the proposition of calling a constitutional convention. This proposition was voted on by both houses and failed to pass in the Senate after having passed the House of Commons by a vote of sixty-seven to forty. The free suffrage resolution passed the House by a vote of seventy-five to thirty-six but failed to receive the three-fifths majority in the Senate. Another bill was immediately introduced in the House and passed by a vote of eighty-nine to twenty-four, a demonstration which seemed sufficient warning to the Senate, for the original bill was again taken up by that body and passed by a vote of thirty-three to seventeen. The first battle had been won, but the Democrats were yet to learn that the struggle was by no means at an end, for it was not until 1857 that free suffrage was obtained.

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[75] *Mecklenburg Jeffersonian,* quoted in the *Standard,* July 12, 1848.

[76] *Standard,* May 17, 1848.

The importance of the introduction of the issue into party politics in North Carolina deserves special notice. It was, along with the slavery question, the means of bringing the Democratic party back into control as an alert, aggressive organization. The crusading spirit manifested in support of the proposition turned the tide of young men from the Whig to the Democratic party.[77] The fact that the attention of the people was attracted to a matter of purely state significance is also of importance. It would be hard to find in the history of North Carolina a political issue that has had more far-reaching consequences, as is indicated by J. S. Bassett in the following estimation of its importance to the state:

> This was the greatest purely political victory ever won in the State. It was a great triumph for liberty and human equality. It broke the power of the landed class over the landless class. Indeed, it stood for a kinder feeling on the part of the aristocracy for the landless men of the country. Besides all this, it meant a great deal for the Democrats. The moral strength that was developed in them during this nine years' con-

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[77] J. S. Bassett, *Suffrage in the State of North Carolina*, p. 284.

test was the making of them. It gave them a sure control of the loyalty of a majority of the whites of the State. It did more. It drew so closely to that party the landless whites that four years later it was not a difficult thing for the leaders to carry them with the party in the movement of secession.[78]

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[78] J. S. Bassett, *Suffrage in the State of North Carolina.*

CHAPTER VII

CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS, 1844-1850

THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS OF 1844 AND 1848

The divergence between the Calhoun and Van Buren factions of the Democratic party in North Carolina came to be more apparent as the election of 1844 approached. As early as 1841 there began to appear in the reports of the county meetings expressions of preference for either Calhoun or Van Buren. Calhoun's popularity was chiefly due to his attitude on Southern Rights. It was soon obvious that he could not hope to be more than a sectional candidate, and yet his supporters in North Carolina gave evidence of having great expectations that the apparently impossible might be accomplished. County meetings in every section of the state avowed their support for the South Carolinian, and a number of the Democratic newspapers gave him their support.

On February 15, 1843, the *Standard* made a definite move by placing Van Buren's name at the head of its editorial columns with the statement that he was the Democratic candidate for president, subject to the decision of the national convention. In an editorial of the same issue Loring declared, "We believe by far the largest portion of the Democracy of this State prefers Mr. Van Buren as their first choice; though we know of no hostility to Mr. Calhoun, or any other distinguished candidate before the people."[1] The *Mecklenburg Jeffersonian,* an ardent supporter of Calhoun, immediately attacked the position of the *Standard* and a family quarrel among the Democratic newspapers followed.[2]

All evidence points to the conclusion that Van Buren had very little support in the state. It was true that he was loyally upheld by Loring, who declared, "To restore Mr. Van Buren is not merely to do justice to an injured and slandered patriot, but is to vindicate measures of high importance to public welfare, and to sustain truth in opposition to error."[3] But such an opinion was not generally accepted, for all the old prejudices were revived against Van Buren and, in addition, his attitude on the Texas question was unpopular. An interesting insight into the opinions of his presidential prospects may be had from the following statement received by Congressman David S. Reid from one of his constituents just before the national convention:

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[1] *Standard,* February 15, 1843.

[2] See *supra,* pp. 23-24, for an account of this controversy.

> I have seen and conversed with many of our political friends since the result of the Vir'g. election & since the reception of Mr. Van Buren's Texas letter. I must in candor say, there is quite a feeling of despondency in our ranks, and quite an apprehensive distrust of Mr. Van Buren's present availability; though we concede that the nomination at Baltimore is strictly due him & have anticipated no other result, yet, after the late indications we all would go into the canvass with no enthusiasm & with every anticipation of defeat. There is quite a strong Texas current with us & if it be not a violation of national faith & honor, nine in ten of our population will vote the annexation.[4]

While there were some evidences of hostility to Van Buren among the partisans of Calhoun, this was not altogether a prevailing condition. A characteristic attitude held by many is stated in the following resolutions passed by a county meeting in Wayne County:

> Resolved, That we have supported Martin Van Buren in all former elections when he was a candidate, and will do it again should it be decided by the party to bring him before the people. But while we have undiminished confidence in his patriotism and ability, we fear the unfounded prejudices raised against him in a contest still fresh in memory, are not so far overcome as to make his nomination politic.
>
> Resolved, That with JOHN C. CALHOUN, for leader, we will go fearlessly to the contest, *Certain of success.*[5]

On May 31, 1843, William W. Holden wrote his opening editorial in the *Standard* as the new editor, and in so doing announced that he would strike from the head of his editorial columns the name of Van Buren, but stated that in doing this he wished it distinctly understood that he was not taking a stand against the former President. He declared that he would pledge his support to no man in advance of the national convention, preferring to leave entirely to that body the selection of the candidate for the party. Holden's act had a wholesome effect on the divided party. He next began a plea for harmony and organization within the party that did much to repair the damage done by Loring during the last years of his editorship.

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[3] *Standard,* April 5, 1843.

[4] John Garland to David S. Reid, May 12, 1844, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. I (1803-45).

[5] *Standard,* March 1, 1843.

At the national convention which met in Baltimore on May 27, Romulus M. Saunders, one of the delegates from North Carolina, called the convention to order and, after the meeting had been organized, moved that the two-thirds rule be adopted. This move was interpreted as an attempt to prevent the nomination of Van Buren, as no doubt it was, for Saunders was very bitter against the former President for having once made the statement that Saunders "thought himself the only person in North Carolina fit to hold office."[6] When the balloting for president began it was demonstrated that the North Carolina delegation was not agreed on a candidate, though on three ballots the delegation was united, as the following table will indicate:

First Ballot—Van Buren 2; Cass 4; Johnson 5.
Second Ballot—Cass 5; Johnson 5.
Third Ballot—Johnson 11.
Fourth Ballot—Cass 11.
Fifth Ballot—Cass 7; Johnson 4.
Sixth Ballot—Cass 7; Johnson 4.
Seventh Ballot—Van Buren 2; Cass 7; Johnson 2.
Eighth Ballot—Van Buren 2; Cass 8; Calhoun 1.
Ninth Ballot—Polk 11.

The results of the national convention were received in North Carolina with great satisfaction, Holden making the announcement with "inexpressible pleasure." The young editor ended an enthusiastic report of the work of the convention with the statement: "Our delegates left us amid darkness: they have come back in light. TEXAS and POLK—*Democratic principles,* and action will now be the words, until the standard of democracy shall float in triumph from the national battlements."[7] There can be no doubt that the selection of a candidate who favored the annexation policy was a matter of gratification to most Democrats in the state. Furthermore, the fact that Polk was a native of North Carolina and had been educated at the State University enhanced the popularity of his nomination.

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[6] *Raleigh Register*, June 18, 1844.

At first the Whigs were inclined to underestimate the significance of the nominees and the platform of the Baltimore Convention. Willie P. Mangum wrote to a relative that the work of the convention was "a literal disbanding of the party for this Campaign—The sole object is to keep the party in harness for '48." He concluded his letter with the observation "We shall literally crush the ticket. They feel it. They know it."[8] Mangum was not long in learning that the candidacy of Polk was a more dangerous matter to the ascendancy of his party than he had at first judged. The Democratic organization in North Carolina was unusually busy, the newspapers were gaining strength, and the party leaders were canvassing the state.

The Whig tactics in opposing the candidacy of Polk proved to be demagogism of the meanest sort. In the month following the meeting of the national convention, there appeared in the Whig newspapers in the state a letter signed by Thomas Alexander, of Mecklenburg county, which stated that Ezekiel Polk, the grandfather of James K. Polk, had proved himself a traitor to the cause of the American colonies during the Revolution by deserting a company over which he had been captain and placing himself under the protection of Lord Cornwallis.[9] The Democratic leaders considered the accusation damaging to the candidacy of Polk, and it was therefore decided to have evidence produced contradicting the accusation. William H. Haywood, Jr., prepared a lengthy document setting forth the patriotism of Polk's ancestors, and Ezekiel Polk immediately came to be the outstanding issue of the campaign.

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[7] *Standard,* June 5, 1844.

[8] Willie P. Mangum to P. H. Mangum, May 29, 1844, Willie P. Mangum Papers, 1843-44.

[9] *Raleigh Star,* July 24, 1844.

The state elections, which took place in August, indicated that the Whigs were still very strong in North Carolina. In view of this the Democrats scarcely hoped to carry the state in November, and their apprehensions were confirmed when it was known that Clay had received 32,939 votes and Polk 29,549.

The North Carolina delegation in the national convention of 1848 held a meeting before the opening of the convention and decided to vote for James Buchanan for president and James I. McKay for vice-president.[10] This decision was adhered to during the first two ballots for the presidential candidate with the exception of one vote cast for Levi Woodbury. After the second ballot, when it became apparent that Buchanan could not be nominated, the North Carolina delegation changed its vote to Cass. The suggestion of McKay's name for vice-president had come from Asa Biggs,[11] one of the North Carolina delegation, but no encouragement was received from other delegations, for only two votes other than those cast by the North Carolinians were given McKay.

The nomination of Cass and Butler met with no ardent response in the state. While there was agreement among some of the party leaders that the ticket was strong and "Cass was not obnoxious on the slavery question,"[12] yet there was evidence that Cass excited little enthusiasm, and the emphasis of the campaign was a fight against Taylor rather than a fight for Cass.

Before the meeting of the national conventions Taylor had been praised by the Democratic newspapers for his military record, and there had even been some suggestion that he be the Democratic nominee for president. When he accepted the Whig nomination the Democrats were placed in a rather embarrassing position, but they did not hesitate to turn on him and condemn him as totally unfit for the office of president and as one who was allowing himself to be used as a tool to satisfy the Whig craving for office. The Democrats also stressed the inconsistency of the Whigs' action in condemning the Mexican War and then selecting one of the heroes of that war as their candidate, such a course being characterized as "another attempt at Harrison hard cider humbuggery and nothing else."[13] The slavery and sectional feeling entered into the campaign to the discomfort of both parties. The Whigs condemned Cass as being unsafe in his views on slavery, and the Democrats condemned the Whig candidate for vice-president, Millard Fillmore, on account of his alleged abolitionist sentiments. It is possible that a Whig campaign circular stating that many Democrats would vote for Taylor had some degree of truth in it, for Taylor had made many Democratic friends during the war, and the fact that he was a Southerner and a slaveholder was in his favor.[14] The election returns seemed to indicate this, for Taylor carried North Carolina by a majority of 8,154. While both parties cast a larger vote in 1848 than in 1844, the Whig majority of 1848 was 4,764 in excess of their majority of 1844. The *Standard* offered the following explanation of the Democratic failure:

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[10] *Standard,* May 31, 1848.

[11] *Ibid.,* May 10, 1848.

[12] J. C. Dobbin to David S. Reid, June 16, 1848, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. II (1845-50).

> We are now satisfied, and it is with pain that we confess the mortifying fact, that in this State we have lost hundreds of votes, solely on the ground that Gen. Cass was a Northern and Gen. Taylor was a Southern man! A friend writing us from one of the Counties says: "The falling off was principally in the Democratic vote, owing doubtless to the impression which it was impossible to remove, that our candidate, being a Northern man was at heart opposed to the South upon the slavery question." This tells the tale, and is one of the main causes of our defeat in the State. That Gen. Taylor's military services and military renown had considerable effect upon the masses, it would be useless to conceal or deny; but above and beyond all this, the Slavery question was the only one boldly in issue here, and the result was shaped and fixed according to the opinions

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[13] J. C. Dobbin to David S. Reid, June 16, 1848, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. II (1845-50).

[14] Circular issued by the Central Committee of the Whig Party, 1848, Willie P. Mangum Papers, 1847-49.

of the masses in regard to the locations and supposed views of the respective candidates.[15]

CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS, 1844-1850

In 1845 the congressional campaigns were fought with vigor and more than usual interest. In the first district the Whigs still held a majority sufficiently large to cause the Democrats to abstain from contesting the field. Thomas L. Clingman was the Whig nominee and for a time it appeared that he would have the field alone. But Clingman had made a sufficient number of enemies among the Whigs to cause his rival for the convention nomination, James Graham, to decide to run as an independent candidate. The split pleased the Democrats, who joined with the dissatisfied Whigs, giving their vote to Graham, who was elected over Clingman by a majority of 326. The Democratic candidate in the second district was Charles Fisher. The *Raleigh Register* described him as "one of the most adroit tacticians of the day" and expressed some apprehension regarding the result of the campaign. The contest did prove to be unusually close, Fisher's Whig rival, D. M. Barringer, winning by only twenty-six votes. The Democratic incumbent of the third district, David S. Reid, was opposed by A. B. McMillan, a Whig whom the Democrats considered "weak in intellect and . . . full of the worst heresies of the Federal Hartford School."[16] Reid had proved himself a valuable man in Congress and had no difficulty in being reëlected. In the fourth district the Democrats had no candidate. Romulus M. Saunders, the Democratic incumbent of the fifth district, announced that he would not be a candidate to succeed himself, and James C. Dobbin, a Democrat, was elected over J. H. Haughton to succeed Saunders. In the sixth and seventh districts the Democratic candidates, James I. McKay and J. R. J. Daniel, were elected by the largest majorities given in the campaigns. The contest in the eighth district was especially bitter, the Democratic candidate, Henry S. Clark, being so acrimoniously attacked by the editor of the *North State Whig* that he deemed it necessary to challenge the editor to a duel. It was thought at first that the Whigs would offer no candidate in this district, and in view of this Henry I. Toole, a Democrat, announced himself in opposition to Clark, who was the nominee of the Democratic convention. The Whigs took advantage of this situation and offered Richard S. Donnell as a candidate; whereupon Toole withdrew from the contest and Clark was elected. One of the most interesting of the campaigns took place in the ninth district. Asa Biggs, the Democratic nominee, was accused by the Whigs of being "a demagogue of the first order," but in reality he was an excellent campaigner who stuck closely to the political issues of the day. He made the tariff of 1842 a special point of attack and later attributed his success over his Whig rival, David Outlaw, to his position on that issue.[17] The contest was a close one, Biggs winning by only 146 votes.

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[15] *Standard,* November 15, 1848.

[16] *Ibid.,* July 2, 1845.

The results of the congressional elections of 1845 were very gratifying to the Democrats, for the party had been successful in six districts. Furthermore, in the three districts where Whig candidates had been successful, two of them, Dockery and Graham, had opposed the regular Whig nominees, and the third had been elected by a majority of "26 fraudulent votes," according to the *Standard*.[18]

The success of the Democrats in the election of 1845 caused the Whig leaders of the General Assembly of 1846-47 to meet in a caucus to form a plan of redistricting the state in a manner that would insure Whig control of the congressional delegation. Under the leadership of Kenneth Rayner a bill was passed which gave the Whigs undoubted control of six districts, with one other district left in doubt. The *Raleigh Register* stated that the bill was a liberal measure in view of the fact that the Whigs had it in their power so to district the state as to assure them of seven districts and the Democrats of two.[19] John W. Ellis led the Democrats in opposing what they termed "raynermandering" the state, but their opposition met only with the response that the Whigs were undoing "the Democratic gerrymander of 1842."

[17] Biggs, *Autobiography*, p. 9.

[18] *Standard*, August 20, 1845.

[19] *Raleigh Register*, December 4, 1846.

The results of the Whig gerrymander were fully felt by the Democrats in the congressional elections of 1847, when only two of the six Democratic incumbents were returned to office and one new Democratic member elected. The sixth and seventh districts were the strong Democratic districts. In the sixth, five Democrats and one Whig were in the contest. The Democratic candidates were J. R. J. Daniel (the incumbent), Archibald H. Arrington (a member of Congress), M. T. Hawkins (a former member of Congress), Henry I. Toole, and R. C. Pritchard, and the Whig candidate was Sidney Weller. By the middle of the summer, Hawkins, Pritchard, and Weller had withdrawn from the race, leaving the contest largely to Daniel and Arrington, since Toole had practically no support. Daniel was reëlected by a majority of 486.

The redistricting had resulted in placing James I. McKay and James C. Dobbin, both strong Democrats, in the same district. But in view of McKay's record Dobbin was unwilling to be a candidate for reëlection. McKay was opposed by Robert K. Bryan, an independent Democrat, and William R. Hall, a Whig, but he was reëlected by a majority of 1,868 votes. The new arrangement left the political complexion of the fifth district uncertain. The only close contest in the elections was conducted in this district where Abraham W. Venable, the Democratic candidate, succeeded in defeating John Kerr, the Whig candidate, by a majority of 153 votes. Other Democratic candidates who failed to be elected in 1847 were J. L. Clemmons, of the fourth, William K. Lane of the eighth, and Asa Biggs of the ninth district.

No change was made in the relative strength of the parties by the congressional elections of 1849. Venable and Daniel were returned from the fifth and sixth districts, and William S. Ashe, a Democrat, was elected in the eighth district to succeed James I. McKay, who declined to run again after having served seven consecutive terms. Ashe received the convention nomination but was opposed by David Reid, of New Hanover County, who ran as an independent Democrat. Reid stated that the convention which nominated Ashe was composed of village politicians and was not representative of the district. This statement brought him into disfavor with many, and he was condemned in the *Wilmington Journal* for attempting to divide the party and give the Whigs an opportunity to defeat the convention nominee.[20] There was no convention nominee in the sixth district, but Daniel did not have the field alone, for he was opposed by W. J. Clark, who was also a Democrat. The chief issues between Daniel and Clark seemed to be matters of a personal nature, the supporters of Clark contending that Daniel had been in office long enough, and the supporters of Daniel contending that Clark was too young and inexperienced to serve acceptably as a congressman. The latter argument seems to have been generally accepted, for Daniel defeated Clark without difficulty. The other unsuccessful Democratic candidates in the election of 1849 were Green W. Caldwell of the third district, William K. Lane of the eighth district, and Thomas J. Person of the ninth district.

The expiration of the term of Senator Mangum and the resignation of Senator Haywood made it necessary for the General Assembly of 1846 to elect two United States senators. The Democrats nominated Asa Biggs and James I. McKay, but the Whig majority in the legislature assured the reëlection of Mangum and the election of George E. Badger to succeed Haywood. In 1848 Badger's term expired and his reëlection was made uncertain for a time because both houses of the legislature of that year were equally divided between the two parties. The Whigs insisted that the Democrats had no right to oppose their choice for senator in view of the fact that the state had elected a Whig governor and had given its electoral vote to a Whig candidate for president. Badger's position on the question of the Mexican War and slavery made him unpopular with many Whigs, and the Democrats were beginning to look to the leadership of Thomas L. Clingman on these issues, a fact which gave hope that the combination of Democrats and dissatisfied Whigs would bring about the election of Clingman, who was very anxious for the office. It was generally understood that Clingman was seriously considering deserting the Whig party, and his statement of politics given to a committee of Democratic members of the General Assembly made him a satisfactory Democratic candidate. In his statement Clingman gave emphatic opposition to the Wilmot Proviso and the establishment of a national bank, and he agreed that he would not advocate the repeal of the Walker tariff, though he favored certain modifications of it. A deadlock between the partisans of Badger and Clingman took place in the legislature, but the friends of Badger finally succeeded in bringing about his reëlection.

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[20] *Wilmington Journal,* July 20, 1849.

CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS OF GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 1844-1850

On Thursday, December 14, 1843, the Democratic state convention met in Raleigh to formulate a platform and nominate a candidate for the gubernatorial campaign of 1844. There were in the convention 146 delegates, representing thirty-one counties.[21] While the attendance was not large, the type of men in the delegations was of a high order, including, among other prominent men, three future governors of the state.[22] Louis D. Wilson, of Edgecombe, was selected as president of the convention, and the work of the organization proceeded in a harmonious manner. The county meetings had almost unanimously indicated that Michael Hoke was the choice of the Democrats for governor, and he was therefore nominated without opposition. The platform was a very characteristic Democratic document. It gave the usual Democratic beliefs on the bank and tariff issues; upheld the veto power that was being condemned by the Whigs on account of Tyler's use of it; favored the return of the fine imposed on Jackson while in New Orleans; and condemned direct taxes. The *Raleigh Register,* in criticizing the platform, stated that it was almost entirely a negative document which was "in favor of nothing except MICHAEL HOKE, for Governor, and paying General Jackson one thousand dollars."[23]

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[21] *Standard,* December 20, 1843.

[22] John W. Ellis, David S. Reid, and Thomas Bragg.

[23] *Raleigh Register,* December 29, 1843.

The Democratic candidate for governor was a man of strong personality, an attractive speaker, and a person of great energy. He had the ability to make friends and hold the respect of his enemies, as was indicated in the confession of the *Raleigh Register,* which stated, "we had as soon have him chosen as any man of his party in North Carolina."[24] Hoke met his Whig competitor, William A. Graham, in joint debates at various places. The chief issue between the candidates was the question of the annexation of Texas, Hoke favoring and Graham opposing annexation. There was nothing of unusual interest in the campaign, which was conducted in a rather dignified and formal manner. The election was a Whig victory. Hoke received 39,433 votes and Graham 42,586. The campaign proved fatal to Hoke, for he died on September 9, having contracted malaria while canvassing the state.[25]

The Democrats also met defeat in the election of the General Assembly of 1844. However, the Whigs had elected only two more senators than the Democrats, and before the opening of the legislature four members of the senate died, and the new elections resulted in giving the parties an equal number in the upper chamber. A deadlock took place when the election of speaker of the senate was attempted. The Whigs offered to throw dice for the speakership or bargain for the offices of the senate by offering the Democrats the minor offices for the speakership or the speakership for the minor offices, but the Democrats refused in a spirit of righteous contempt "to gamble or trade" for public office, and finally Burgess S. Gaither, a moderate Whig from Burke County, was elected.[26] The Whigs had no difficulty in electing a speaker of the House from their ranks.

An appeal calling on the Democrats to hold county meetings for the purpose of selecting delegates to attend the state convention of 1846 was made by the *Standard* in October, 1845. As the reports of the county meetings were published it became apparent that there was no such unity on the choice of a candidate as had existed in 1844. Many of the meetings expressed choice of a candidate, while the preference of others varied widely, including W. W. Avery, Weldon N. Edwards, Asa Biggs, Calvin Graves, D. W. Courts, James I. McKay, Walter F. Leak, and Charles Fisher. The Calhoun faction of the party were inclined to agree on Fisher, and his selection appeared quite probable until he declined to allow his name to be presented to the convention.[27]

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[24] *Raleigh Register,* November 27, 1844.

[25] *Standard,* September 18, 1844.

[26] *Ibid.,* November 27, 1844.

The state convention met January 8, 1846. Thirty-five counties were represented by about 140 delegates. Louis D. Henry was elected president of the convention and on taking the chair he made a speech devoted to a defense of President Polk's foreign policies and a criticism of Whig politics. The selection of a candidate for governor was a more difficult matter than usual. Strange as it may seem, the leaders of the East insisted that the candidate be a western man, the desire to win the West from Whig control doubtless being the motive back of this move.[28] After considerable deliberation, Green W. Caldwell was selected by the convention to be the Democratic candidate. Caldwell was the superintendent of the United States branch mint, and though he had served in the legislature, he had taken no very active part in politics. His nomination came as a complete surprise to most of the citizens of the state, including the nominee himself. The Whig newspapers offered various explanations of the nomination, including one by the *Charlotte Journal,* which suggested that there were a number of Democratic politicians seeking Caldwell's office and using the nomination as a means of forcing him to vacate![29]

The platform of 1846 condemned the national bank; advocated a "constitutional treasury"; attacked the tariff of 1842; approved the admission of Texas; and praised President Polk's foreign policy. During the sessions of the convention, speeches were delivered by a number of the leaders of the party, who made the important national issues the chief topics of discussion.

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[27] H. M. Stokes to David S. Reid, December 10, 1845, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. II (1845-50).

[28] C. Graves to David S. Reid, January 15, 1846, *ibid.*

[29] *Charlotte Journal,* quoted in the *Raleigh Register,* January 23, 1846.

Before adjourning, the convention authorized the chairman to appoint a state committee of thirteen members.

While the nomination of Caldwell came as a surprise, his announcement on January 20, which stated that he would be unable to accept the nomination, was not a surprise to many of the Democratic and Whig leaders. Ill health and private matters were offered as the reason for his declining the nomination, but few doubted the real reason to be his desire to remain in a position that he was sure of rather than risk defeat in a race with Graham. A move was next made to nominate Weldon N. Edwards, but he requested the state committee not to consider him as a candidate.[30] In the meantime an independent candidate, Walter F. Leak, announced his candidacy. He had been the choice of several county meetings, and being anxious to make the race he entered upon his campaign without awaiting a decision from the Democratic state committee. On being told that the state committee had been called to meet in Raleigh for the purpose of making an official nomination for the party, Leak informed the committee through a letter to William W. Holden that "he would give place to no nomination the committee might make."[31] Holden and certain other leaders in Raleigh were taking an active part in shaping the policies of the party, and some hostility and jealousy were being evidenced because of this, as was manifested in the term "Raleigh clique," which was applied to these leaders. Leak shared in this hostility, and since he had little hope of being selected by the committee, he attempted defiance. The state committee met and announced the selection of James B. Shepard as the official candidate of the Democratic party. This action was attacked in a most caustic manner by Leak in a circular, addressed to the members of the Democratic party, in which he stated he would remain in the contest even though he should get no more than five hundred votes.[32] The *Fayetteville Carolinian* suggested that the claims of Leak and Shepard be presented to the state committee, excluding the members who resided in Raleigh from participating in the decision, but the *Standard* rejected the suggestion as a manifestation of disrespect to the organization. It soon appeared that Shepard had the support of the Democratic newspapers. In view of this, Leak realized it would be futile for him to continue in the canvass, but he made one last effort to save his pride by inviting Shepard to join with him in requesting the state committee to decide which candidate should withdraw from the contest. He further requested that both withdraw from the canvass until the committee made the decision. Shepard agreed to the first proposition but refused to accept the second. The state committee reassembled and rendered a second decision in favor of Shepard. Leak then withdrew from the contest in as graceful a manner as possible.

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[30] *Standard,* March 18, 1846.

[31] Circular of Walter F. Leak to the Democratic party of North Carolina, March 19, 1846, *Raleigh Register,* March 31, 1846.

[32] *Ibid.*

At the time of his nomination Shepard was a young man who had proved himself an orator of ability. The spirited manner in which he undertook a canvass of the state gave the Democrats hopes that the contest might yet be won in some miraculous manner. Yet there was never any real doubt regarding the reëlection of Graham, who had grown in popularity while governor. In the campaign he confined himself largely to a defense of his administration, especially defending the internal improvements program, while Shepard attacked Whig "extravagance" and discussed the national issues which were causing considerable excitement at that time. The emphasis on such national issues as the tariff of 1842 and the wisdom of President Polk's foreign policy proved unfortunate to Shepard when the Democratic Senator of North Carolina, William H. Haywood, Jr., resigned rather than vote for the tariff of 1846, and when the Mexican War, which was called "Polk's war" by the Whigs, was declared.

The election resulted in the defeat of Shepard, who received 35,627 votes, a poll of 3,806 fewer than the votes cast for Hoke in 1844. Graham received 43,486 votes, an increase of 900 over the votes cast for him in 1844. The Whigs also succeeded in electing a majority in both houses of the General Assembly. "Happy, happy old State, she can now have two senators on the floor of Congress, who will do good service with Webster and Cilley, under the piratical flags of abolition and tariff, in assaulting the institutions of the South."[33] Such was the lamentation of the *Standard* when the returns were all in.

If the Democrats of North Carolina were handicapped occasionally by the assumption of undue authority by a "Raleigh clique," they at least had the consolation of knowing that the Whig party was also at times threatened with "clique" dominance. The Whig convention of 1848 seems to have been manipulated by such a group. A few leaders appeared to disregard all the prospective Whig candidates for governor that had been favored by the masses of the party and selected Charles Manly, who had not been mentioned for the office. The selection of Manly proved to be very unpopular with many Whigs, a fact that gave the Democrats more than usual hope as they began to make preparations for the campaign.

The Democratic state convention, which met in Raleigh on April 12, 1848, was not so well attended as was the convention of 1846, but the meeting proved to be a more satisfactory gathering than the previous convention had been. Twenty-five counties were represented by 114 delegates, who were organized under the presidency of Weldon N. Edwards. At the time of the opening of the convention there was no general agreement on a prospective candidate for governor. Charles Fisher and Walter F. Leak were the most prominent among those who had been mentioned, but neither was considered available by many of the party leaders. Fisher had refused to be a candidate in 1846, and Leak was not only handicapped by his activities of 1846 but he had also given public notice, before the meeting of the convention of 1848, that should he be nominated he would accept only on the condition that he would not be expected to canvass the state. The committee selected by the convention to choose a candidate had difficulty in coming to an agreement. Four men in the committee (William W. Holden, James B. Shepard, W. K. Lane, and R. P. Dick) led a movement favoring the nomination of David S. Reid, of Rockingham County, who was finally agreed upon and nominated by the convention.[34]

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[33] *Standard,* August 19, 1846.

The platform was prepared by Holden, and according to the *Raleigh Register* was "unparalleled in the history of parties in North Carolina" for its "bitter denunciation and gross invective."[35] Of course this statement was an exaggeration, but Holden *was* severe in his criticism of the Whig attitude on the question of the Mexican War.[36] The platform upheld Polk and his administration; condemned the preamble of the war appropriation bill of the General Assembly of 1846; disapproved of the Whig extravagance in increasing the state debt; objected to the Whig legislation providing that the officers of the regiments organized to serve in the Mexican War should be appointed instead of elected by the companies; criticized the redistricting of the state by the Whig legislature; and opposed the Wilmot Proviso.[37]

Two distinguished visitors, Stephen A. Douglas and Sam Houston, were invited to take seats in the convention. These men spoke on national issues and both made a favorable impression on all except the Whig newspaper reporters. The Democrats had criticized the coming of Clay to the state in 1844; therefore it was now the Whigs' turn to condemn, and the *Register* led an attack on the convention that dared invite "a member of Congress from a non-slaveholding state to instruct the people of a slaveholding state in their duty."[38]

When Reid received the official notice of his nomination he wrote to the notification committee stating that it would be impossible for him to accept. This act would have determined the fate of his candidacy had it not been for the persistency of William W. Holden. Since 1843 Holden had been laboring as no other man in the state to bring about the supremacy of the Democratic party, and he saw in the political situation of 1848 and the candidacy of Reid a real hope of accomplishing the task. Immediately after the convention he

[34] Hamilton, *Party Politics*, p. 116.

[35] *Raleigh Register*, April 15, 1848.

[36] See *supra*, p. 112.

[37] *Standard*, April 19, 1848.

[38] *Raleigh Register*, April 22, 1848.

wrote a long letter to Reid outlining the possibilities before him and offered certain suggestions for conducting the campaign.[39] When Reid's letter declining the nomination was received, Holden refused to acquiesce. He consulted a few of the party leaders in Raleigh, who decided to send a special message to Reid in great haste impressing on him the necessity of reconsidering and entering the race immediately. The message had the desired effect, for Reid accepted the nomination on May 3rd and came to Raleigh to make preparations to begin the campaign.

In Raleigh Reid met with a group of the Democratic leaders and explained to them his plan of advocating free suffrage.[40] There was some disagreement among the leaders on the advisability of introducing this issue into the campaign, but Reid was given sufficient encouragement to cause him to adhere to his determination. After a brief stay in Raleigh he went to New Bern where he opened his campaign by meeting Manly in joint debate. The Whig candidate devoted his campaign speech at New Bern largely to a condemnation of the Mexican War policies of the Democratic party. Reid answered his adversary's attack on the national policies of the Democratic party and then turned his attention to the suffrage question, discussing it at some length. Manly was called upon to reply, but he had been taken completely by surprise and asked to be given until the next day to consider the issue. On the following day the candidates met at Beaufort, and there Manly gave his unreserved opposition to free suffrage. From that day the attention of the voters of North Carolina was centered on Reid and free suffrage, and as the campaign progressed it became evident that the Democrats had at last found an issue that threatened the Whig supremacy in the state.

Under the leadership of Reid and Holden the Democratic party began to show a new spirit of progress. In addition to the stand taken on free suffrage the party was committed in 1848 to an advanced program of development including the advocacy of an improved public school system, a system of state banks, "judicial" internal improvements, and reform in the administrative departments of the state. Perhaps it would be incorrect to state that the Democrats as a whole favored such a program, but the party was supporting a leadership committed to it, and this indicated advancement.

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[39] W. W. Holden to David S. Reid, April 19, 1848, David S. Reid Papers, II (1848-50), p. 250.

[40] See *supra*, p. 131.

Reid and Manly stumped the state together and conducted a campaign of much interest. The candidates presented an interesting contrast as speakers. Manly was inclined to be slangy in his speech and was apt in the art of relating anecdotes, while Reid was always serious and gave more careful attention to substantiating his arguments. Regarding this difference between the speakers James C. Dobbin wrote Reid:

> Mr. Manly may entertain & amuse the crowd with his declamatory eloquence & his anecdotes—but you are pursuing the true course—expose the scarcity of his arguments, the absurdity of the few he advances and then bring home to the people in the plainest manner—the triumphant operation of the tariff of 46—bringing in millions more revenue than that of 1842—Vindicate the Mexican War & then hold the Whigs responsible for the doings of the late legislature.[41]

The election resulted in a Whig victory by a close margin, Manly receiving 42,536 votes and Reid 41,682. The Democrats gained ten counties over the last election; Reid received 6,055 more votes than had been cast for Shepard in 1846, and Manly received 950 less than the number cast for Graham in the previous election. An equal number of Democrats and Whigs were elected to both houses of the General Assembly, and, although several vacancies occurred before the meeting of the legislature, the special elections did not change the relative strength of the parties. When the General Assembly met, a series of compromises was entered into between the parties, which resulted in the election of a Democratic speaker of the Senate and a Whig speaker of the House of Commons.

When viewed from the standpoint of its subsequent significance to the party, the election of 1848 may be considered a victory for the Democrats. Out of the old conservative and reactionary party was emerging a new progressive program—a more energetic campaigning—an optimistic hopefulness that culminated in triumph. It was now time for the Whig newspapers to lament, and the *Raleigh Register* proved itself equal to the occasion, as this extract will indicate:

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[41] J. C. Dobbin to David S. Reid, June 16, 1848, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. II (1845-50).

> The result of the Election in this State, for Governor and Members of the Legislature, gives cause for bitter and serious reflection. That it is humiliating and mortifying is beyond all question, a melancholy fact; and when the causes and effects which have brought it about are examined into, it is doubly so. We are vanquished, virtually if not really![42]

Before the meeting of the state convention of 1850, a Democratic caucus was held in Raleigh to consider the selection of a candidate for governor and to discuss party issues.[43] The caucus had no difficulty in agreeing on Reid as the candidate, but a crisis took place when Asa Biggs introduced a resolution advocating a constitutional amendment that would forbid state aid in support of internal improvements except when such aid had been approved by the voters at the polls. The resolution was withdrawn when it was indicated that the party would be divided on the matter.

In 1849 Holden wrote Reid requesting him to reënter the race for governor. He consented to do so if he would not be expected to support the Nashville Convention or the chartering of the North Carolina Railroad. Before the meeting of the state convention, however, other candidates were suggested for nomination. In the eastern part of the state, James C. Dobbin received some support, and Walter F. Leak again expressed a willingness to run indicating that he was no longer averse to canvassing the state. In view of the lack of a unanimous agreement on his candidacy, Reid wrote a public letter declining to be a candidate. In the letter he stated that he believed his nomination was not desirable to a portion of his fellow-citizens, without whose assistance he could not be elected. He also expressed the opinion that the limited time between the meeting of the convention and the election would not afford him opportunity to do justice to himself or his party in a canvass. He concluded his letter by reaffirming his adherence to free suffrage and pledging his support to the convention nominee.[44] In sending the letter to the *Standard* to be published, Reid enclosed a confidential letter to Holden in which he explained in more detail why he had declined to be a candidate. He stated that opposition to him had lately been manifested which resulted in his defeat in an election of members to the board of trustees of the University. He also declared that his objection to chartering the North Carolina Railroad and his criticism of the Nashville Convention would make his candidacy unadvisable. Holden attempted to repeat what had been done in 1848 by sending to Reid an urgent appeal to reconsider his decision. It will be of value to quote this appeal at length, inasmuch as it gives an unusual insight into Holden's position as a party "boss" as well as an interesting account of the North Carolina political situation in 1850. After a brief introduction, Holden presented the following fervent appeal to Reid:

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[42] *Raleigh Register,* August 12, 1848.

[43] *Memoirs of William W. Holden,* p. 7.

> I have read and *reread* your confidential letter, but cannot, for my life, perceive that your reasons for declining are conclusive. So far as the trusteeship is concerned, that argues but little. It is easy to understand how that was done. Hopewell was elected by his being an "iron side" Baptist, and there being no such person in the Board, and the others were chosen because they were *here,* and they or their friends directly sought it. I know your friends, or those really your friends, stood for you. I regret that your name was ever brought forward for it; and if the result had been foreseen, it would not have been. But this, I repeat, proves nothing. You are the strongest man with the *masses* ever presented to the people, and the leaders *dare not* oppose you or even appear indifferent. I know it.
>
> Just look, if you please, at the condition of things. Both the *Mountain Banner* and the *Asheville News,* Whig papers, are *pledged* AGAINST Manly and for "State Reforms." Also the Whigs of Buncombe, who have just had a meeting. In addition to this I shall publish a communication next week, headed "Who shall be the Nominee?" and pressing your name, from a

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[44] *Standard,* June 12, 1850.

well informed Rutherford Democrat, who assures me Bynum is standing for the seat in that County against Manly; and in Halifax and Granville the Whigs are disorganized, and cannot get candidates. Besides Clay has just attacked Taylor in the strongest terms and the Whigs in this State *must* decide between the two. Several Whig papers have already denounced Taylor and next week the Raleigh Star will denounce Manly. The North State Whig and the Raleigh Times are on the fiercest terms. These things, all together, may not indeed give you any Whig votes, but they must produce lukewarmness in the Whig ranks—divisions and heartburnings, which cannot but *diminish* Manly's vote. For the last two months I have carefully kept back from the Standard all evidence of Manly's unpopularity, in hope that he would be again the candidate; there is no doubt that he will be; and I have all these evidences filed away, to be used as soon as he is nominated.

So far as the Central Road is concerned, you have taken, in your letter to me, *the right ground, and the very ground which I have all along told our friends that you would take.* Allow me to assure you that though Raleigh is for the Road *you* are the first choice of every Democrat here; . . . our friends, who recognize the true ground in regard to the Rail Road *prefer* you. They say, and truly, that your election, under the circumstances would not injure the Rail Road Democrats, who have nothing more to ask in the way of opposition, while it would give confidence to the anti-Rail Road Democrats, because they could trust you on the subject. Gen. Saunders, I hear, is warmly for you; and but a few days ago he sent word to our friend D[obbin] by Judge Strange, not to think of running, for that he would be inevitably and disastrously defeated. All the Rail Road men ask is what you have written me. I know it. I can speak for them; and besides being for the Road I have the right to require them, for every honorable consideration, to sustain you. They will do it, almost, if not quite unanimously. Again: if you will run, you are obliged to get the same vote, at least, you got last year west of Raleigh, and I think you will increase it. *Eight or ten counties in the center might have elected you before, by polling their full strength.* With you in the field, I shall call on these Counties by name, point to the vote, and *prove* to them what they can do; and I will address only leading men in them in relation to his duty. These leading men know their facts and they will be *bound* to do their duty towards you.

It is not necessary that you should stump the State at all. You have done it once. You are universally known as Manly's former competitor, *and as the author of equal suffrage.* All you will have to say, will be, that you and the Governor have already stumped the State once and that, while you are willing to do it again, so far as the time will allow, *you await the movements of "His Excellency."* This will then throw the blame on him of leaving his duties here.

In regard to the Nashville Convention, that is a dead question. *I heard four weeks ago that you were opposed to it;* or rather that you thought it inexpedient then; but what of that? we are all for union at the proper time; and in going for it I but yielded to the will of the majority and did not dream of proscribing any one. Saunders occupies the same position you do in regard to it; and so does *Strange now.* All you will have to do in this regard if you accept, is to endorse the Resolutions of the Convention. In regard to Clay's compromise and Taylor's plan you need not advocate either: but you might say, if compelled to choose, that you would take Clay's plan. In your letter of acceptance, you might enforce Equal Suffrage—go for Judges &c by the people, and in regard to "State Reform" generally, called for by the Buncombe Whigs. You might say that you were for "State Reform," and would, if elected, cheerfully coöperate with the Assembly in bringing it about. *Manly could not say that without condemning his own party, which has had the State government years.*

You will see in the last Standard that a number of Counties have called upon you to take the field. *You are unquestionably the first choice of the party.* At our meeting here, Mr. Shepard offered a resolution nominating you, which would have passed by acclamation; but Messrs. Busbee and McRae interfered. It was not withdrawn, however, until they had said you were clearly entitled to the field, *and that they were for you, in preference to any one else,* provided you would consent to run. They opposed the resolution on the ground that it would savor central dictation. If you run Wake will do *better* for you than she did before.

I write the universal opinion of our friends here when I say you are, by far, the strongest man, and that your election is certain. I have not conversed with a single Democrat who speaks otherwise; and *Whigs* have told me that you would certainly beat Manly. So far as I am concerned, I am for you against the world; and if you will consent to run, I will omit neither expense, nor labor nor pains, so far as they go, to insure your success. I will publish the Standard twice a week from the Convention until the election, and labor for you, *with an assurance of triumph,* day and night.

> I shall withhold your letter intended for publication, until I hear from you. . . . Should you utterly decline to run, I shall, of course, publish your letter—with a heavy heart; but I sincerely hope that you will reconsider the matter and agree to take up the field. . . .[45]

To this lengthy letter Holden added three postscripts reëmphasizing his arguments, but in spite of the urgency of the letter Reid still appeared convinced that it would be inexpedient for him to enter the campaign; he therefore reaffirmed his determination not to enter the race. Holden then published the public letter wherein Reid refused to be a candidate, the letter appearing in the *Standard* on the day before the opening of the Democratic state convention.

The state convention met in Raleigh on June 13 with representatives from thirty-six counties in attendance.[46] The convention was organized with Asa Biggs as temporary chairman and Robert Strange as president. The platform adopted condemned the administration of President Taylor; expressed a love for the Union, but a greater love for Southern Rights; stated a willingness to accept the Missouri Compromise as a basis for settling the question of slavery expansion; and supported free suffrage and the election of judges. The question of a candidate was a delicate one. In the face of the greatest possibilities of a triumphant success that the Democratic party had known in fourteen years, factionalism was appearing with its detrimental effects on party unity. The delay in calling the state convention caused some to question the motives of the Central Committee, and the suggestion was made of the possibility that the Democratic leaders were planning a bargain with the Whigs whereby Manly would not be opposed in 1850 if the Whigs would give the Democratic candidate no opposition in 1852.[47] There is little possibility that such an agreement was seriously contemplated, but there is no doubt that if Reid had remained firm in his decision to refuse the nomination, the Democrats would have had difficulty in selecting a candidate who would insure success to the party. The convention took the wise course and nominated Reid in spite of his previous declarations. The *Fayettveille Observer* saw in the nomination a secret move, which was explained as follows:

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[45] W. W. Holden to David S. Reid, June, 1850, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. II (1845-50).

[46] *Standard,* June 19, 1850.

[47] *Wilmington Journal,* May 17, 1850.

> If we might hazard a conjecture or two, we should say, that the convention was afraid to nominate Mr. Dobbin, because of his Internal Improvement votes, which was unpopular in the East, and his advocacy of the Nashville Convention, which would kill any candidate in the West, as we learn. So he was laid on the shelf, who was a few months ago, the most popular man of his party in the State. The second of the above causes probably, (and possibly others), gave Mr. Leak his quietus.
>
> But if we mistake not, there was a secret motive, not avowed even to the great body of the Convention, which produced the nomination of Mr. Reid. We predict that he will not accept the nomination, and we believe it was procured with the knowledge that he would not accept. The leaders of the party, if we mistake not, are afraid to hazard a canvass under their present distracted state on the leading questions of the day. The party is divided on Internal Improvements, on Free Suffrage, on the Slavery question, and especially and vitally on the Nashville Convention. They dared not go before the people and make an issue with the Whigs on these questions. Their object is, we suspect, to make no such issue. It is well known at Raleigh, as we learn, that the leaders have not desired to run a candidate in opposition to Gov. Manly. Yet it would not do to adjourn the Convention without doing something. Therefore, a gentleman was selected who had positively declined. And when he shall again decline, the Central Committee will either put up a man of straw, as they did once before, or let the election go by default—devoting all the efforts of the party to carry the legislature, and content to look forward to the Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections two years hence, when the dangerous questions of the present day may be out of the way. This we believe to be the plan of operations, and we shall be egregiously disappointed if it does not so appear in due time.[48]

The *Observer* was "egregiously disappointed," for Reid accepted the nomination and issued a public letter giving a clear statement of his stand on the leading national and state issues which closely corresponded to the platform adopted by the party convention.[49] It must be acknowledged that Reid's acceptance of the nomination was fortunate, for the *Observer's* account of divisions within the Democratic party was not without some foundation.[50] However, Reid's nomination was satisfactory to the party as a whole, and even a number of the men who had been mentioned as possible candidates or had favored other candidates wrote Reid and offered their support. In addition to the unity within the Democratic party on the candidacy of Reid, several Whig newspapers and many dissatisfied Whigs pledged their support to the Democratic candidate.[51] Manly's unpopularity and the free suffrage issue were responsible for bringing many Whigs into the Democratic ranks.

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[48] *Fayetteville Observer*, June 18, 1850.

[49] *Standard*, July 6, 1850.

The campaign was brief but intensive and energetic. Holden, true to his promise, brought out the material he had "filed away" to use against Manly and began to issue the *Standard* twice a week. Saunders and other leaders joined in the campaign by "taking the stump," and Reid met Manly in a series of joint debates in various parts of the state. The free suffrage issue again took the lead. Manly, realizing the danger of further open opposition to the issue, avowed his acceptance of free suffrage if the basis of representation would be changed from federal to free white. He attempted to show the free-white basis of representation to be a necessary accompaniment to free suffrage, but Reid was alert to show that there was no connection between the two. Manly was, of course, making a bid to the West where there were fewer slaves, but he stirred up the East and the strong pro-slavery element to a more bitter opposition to him.[52] Perhaps it was to counteract such a feeling that he accused Reid of having voted for the Wilmot Proviso, this accusation being made in spite of the fact that Reid was not a member of Congress when the Wilmot Proviso was voted on. It was reported that when Manly made the accusation at Germantown, Reid replied that the statement was "false, and false as hell," to which Manly replied that Reid had voted for the Oregon bill, which contained a clause forbidding slavery in that territory and that such a vote was equivalent to a vote for the Wilmot Proviso.[53] But Manly could do Reid little injury on the slavery issue, for the position of the Democratic candidate was well understood to be "sound" on that issue.

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[50] *Standard,* February 13, 1850.

[51] *Ibid.,* July 3, 24, 1850.

[52] After the election a prominent Whig stated that if Manly's advocacy of the white basis could have been generally credited he could not have gotten 2000 votes east of Raleigh. (C. L. Hinton to W. A. Graham, August 22, 1850, William A. Graham Papers, 1842-50).

An attempt was made by the Whigs to resort to the type of demagogism that had assisted them in previous campaigns. The *Raleigh Times* reported as a well known fact that Reid was an aristocrat having considerable wealth and that he was never known to shake hands with a poor man.[54] The editor of the *Newbernian* spoke of Reid as a "negro-trading candidate," but when promptly called upon by a friend of the candidate and asked to explain what he meant, according to report he explained, in much excitement, that he had been misinformed; he had been told that Reid had some connection with slave trading, but he would correct his mistake in the next issue of his paper.[55] An effort was made to excite religious prejudice against Reid by accusing him of having shown unfriendliness toward the Baptists while he was a member of the General Assembly, by voting against lending Wake Forest College $10,000. The *Standard* took special pains to show that Reid and all his family were devout Baptists and that he had opposed the bill only because of his belief in the separation of Church and State.[56]

The effort of the Whigs to cover the faults of their party and overcome the new spirit of progress manifested by their adversaries proved futile. The election was a victory for the Democrats, a result in accordance with the expectation of many in both parties. Reid received 45,080 votes and Manly 42,337. Comparing the vote with that of the previous election it is disclosed that in 1850 Reid received 3,398 more votes than he had received in 1848 and that Manly received 199 fewer votes in 1850 than had been given him in the previous election. The vote cast for Reid was the largest that had been given a candidate for governor in North Carolina up to that time. The

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[53] Sam F. Adams to David S. Reid, July 11, 1850, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. III (1850-56).

[54] *Ibid.*, July 4, 1850.

[55] *Ibid.*, July 11, 1850.

[56] *Standard*, July 17, 1850.

Democrats were also successful in the election of the General Assembly, gaining a majority of four in the Senate and ten in the House of Commons.

Holden's announcement of the victory was couched in superlative expressions. He opened his account of the election results with the sentence, "We have the high and rare gratification of announcing to our readers, and to the Democracy everywhere, that we have a DEMOCRATIC GOVERNOR and a DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATURE; and that North Carolina is at last completely and gloriously redeemed."[57] Newspapers, politicians, and the rank and file of the Democratic party celebrated the triumph while the vanquished party sought explanations for their losses.

The Whigs were inclined to blame Manly for their defeat, though he was pitied as well as condemned. "And poor Manly is beaten!" wrote one Whig friend, "Poor fellow, he will take it I fear with but little fortitude. . . . And what a Governor we shall have in Reid! He will give Holden the reins of the state."[58] A number of the Whig papers attempted to explain the results of the election, the *Fayetteville Observer* giving the most complete and frank statement on the subject. According to that paper the Democrats were successful because of the following reasons: (1) The popularity of the free suffrage issue; (2) the unpopularity of the proposal to change the basis of representation to free white; (3) prejudices aroused against Manly because of local jealousies existing over internal improvement projects; (4) the unpopularity of Manly's hostility to the Nashville Convention; (5) the dissatisfaction of many with the federal and state taxation system; and (6) the political activities of the "Raleigh clique."[59]

A survey of the means that brought the Democrats back into control of the political affairs of North Carolina reveals three major factors that largely determined the triumph of the party. In the first place, an aggressive, as well as progressive, leadership began shaping the affairs of the party when William W. Holden took charge of the *Standard* and when David S. Reid became a candidate for governor. In the next place, the position taken by the leading Democrats in the state and nation on the slavery question brought the party a loyal support as the national crisis on this issue approached. Finally, the Democratic campaign for free suffrage made a popular appeal that resulted in adding prestige and numerical strength to the party.

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[57] *Standard*, August 7, 1850.

[58] Paul C. Cameron to Joseph B. G. Roulhac, Aug. 8, 1850, *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, II, 298.

[59] *Fayetteville Observer*, August 13, 1850.

The year 1850 stands out as a landmark in the history of the Democratic party of North Carolina. After fourteen years of "exile" the Democrats came back to power in a triumph made significant by progress and democracy. The years of defeat had taught them that ultra-conservatism does not satisfy the desire of the majority of the people for good government. The triumph was indicative of the value of a policy of democratic progress in the development of political institutions.

PART FOUR

DEMOCRATIC ASCENDANCY, 1851-1861

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEMOCRATS AND PARTY ISSUES, 1851-1861

THE ATTAINMENT OF FREE SUFFRAGE

The passage of the suffrage amendment by the General Assembly of 1850-51 was only the first step in the process of amending the constitution by legislative action. After the amendment had been proposed by a three-fifths vote it was necessary that it be published at least six months prior to the next election of the members of the legislature. If the new legislature passed the proposed amendment by a two-thirds majority of all the members of both houses, the proposition would then be submitted to the voters who were qualified to vote for members of the House of Commons, and a majority vote at the polls would make the amendment valid.[1]

At the conclusion of the session of the General Assembly of 1850-51 an address was issued by a group of western legislators who proposed that a constitutional convention be called to pass on free suffrage and the election of judges and justices of peace. The meeting that had been called to frame the address was said to be non-partisan, but in reality it was a Whig meeting, as was evidenced by the fact that out of the thirty-seven members signing the address, thirty-six were members of the Whig party. While the Whigs of the West desired a convention to inaugurate various constitutional reforms, it is evident that the party as a whole had no genuine desire for the convention; the leaders presented arguments in favor of a convention almost solely with a view to diverting the attention of the people from the issue of free suffrage. In the campaign of 1852 the Democratic candidates and editors showed good judgment in keeping the main issue before the people, for while arguments against the convention method appeared, the emphasis was on the desirability of free suffrage and the necessity of voting the Democratic ticket in order that the amendment might be enacted.

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[1] Poore, *Federal and State Constitutions*, p. 1418.

When the election proved to be a Democratic victory, the Whigs realized that the position of the Democrats on the issue had the support of a large majority of the people. In commenting on the Democratic success the *Register* stated:

> It will not be pretended, we presume, by any well informed and candid member of the opposite Party, that the result of the election for Governor, is any test of the strength of the two parties in the State, on purely political issues.[2] It is evident that "Free Suffrage" is stronger than either of the political parties by thousands. It is a popular measure. It was popular in the beginning, as the result in 1848 proved. It defeated Mr. Manly in 1850—and it defeated Mr. Kerr in the late election. That this should have been the result is not at all surprising, for however strongly and sincerely Mr. Kerr may have favored the extension of the right of voting, still Gov. Reid was regarded by the people as the "father" of FREE SUFFRAGE,—and they were easily induced to believe (and every effort was made to produce that impression) that his (Gov. R's) defeat would certainly defeat Free Suffrage. Thus, very many Whigs were prevailed on to forego their party preferences under their anxiety for this measure of reform, which can never become a component part of the Constitution without the aid and vote of the Whigs.[3]

When the General Assembly of 1852-53 met, the suffrage question was referred to a committee of the House of Commons. A majority of the committee reported in favor of a convention to consider free suffrage, and a minority report advocated the legislative method of passing the amendment. The House followed the minority and passed the proposed amendment by the required two-thirds majority, but when it was brought before the Senate it was defeated by a vote of thirty-one to sixteen. A motion to reconsider this action was defeated by a vote of thirty-three to fifteen. This means that free suffrage had failed by one vote. Inasmuch as the Democratic speaker of the Senate, Weldon N. Edwards, had refused to vote, the failure of the amendment was charged against him. The Democratic press in the state naturally resented very much the course taken by Edwards, for he stood alone among Democratic senators in opposing the amendment. The following extract from the *Wilmington Journal* gives a characteristic expression of the feeling aroused by the action of the Democratic speaker:

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[2] The *Register* seems to have considered no issue a purely political issue if the measure was successfully advanced by the Democratic party.

[3] *Raleigh Register*, August 18, 1852.

> It is not our wish to indulge in feelings or expressions of bitterness at this time, and we therefore suppress much that might be in accordance with the dictates of impulse, and perhaps also in pursuance of strict party duty. We presume Mr. Edwards' motives were disinterested, and that he was sincere in his opposition to Free Suffrage. He has no doubt committed himself at some time against the measure, perhaps without due examination, and with the pride of fancied consistency or the stubbornness of Old Fogy prejudice, he still refuses to see with any other spectacles than those falsely colored and distorted ones through which he received his first views and impressions of this subject. We do not want to censure Mr. Edwards, of Warren, but it seems to us unfortunate that a Democrat and Free Suffrage Senate should have chosen him its head and front by electing him to the office of Speaker. Any person has a perfect right to be a Democrat or Whig, Free Suffrage man or Anti-Free Suffrage man as his feeling and judgment may dictate, but it seems to us hardly fair for a man to claim to be of an organization and not with it—to receive its honors and preferments and yet thwart its objects.—Such, however, is Mr. Edwards' position. He claims to be of the Democratic party and yet refuses to act with it upon a question which has formed a prominent and distinctive feature in its State policy. . . . If Mr. Edwards could not act with the Democratic party, he should not have allowed himself to accept an election at its hand.[4]

It was with genuine satisfaction that the *Register* announced that free suffrage had been defeated by a Democrat. The fact that the Democrats knew of Edwards' opposition to free suffrage was also a point that the *Register* cited with an emphasis that was evidently annoying to the free suffrage supporters.[5]

However, not all the Democratic papers were ready to condemn Speaker Edwards for his failure to support his party on the suffrage issue. The *Fayetteville Carolinian,* for example, stated:

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[4] *Wilmington Journal,* December 10, 1852.

[5] *Raleigh Register,* December 11, 1852.

> We have no denunciation to heap upon him for this act. He was an independent member of the Senate, elected upon the ground of opposition to Free Suffrage, which measure he has consistently opposed from the start. But we do regret that the Democratic party of the Senate should have elevated to the Speaker's Chair one who was not pledged to Free Suffrage. That step was no doubt intended to conciliate and harmonize any discord which might have threatened the party, but it was in our judgment one of doubtful policy. Those who do not stand up to the Democratic party ought not to be sustained and advanced by that party.[6]

Edwards wrote a defense of his course, giving at some length an explanation of his belief that land should be the basis of representation, a belief that made it impossible for him to vote consistently with his fellow Democrats. Holden answered the "defense" in a series of editorials on the subject, which were published in the *Standard* during the months of April and May, 1853.

Upon realizing the impossibility of securing a two-thirds majority for free suffrage, the Democrats attempted to get a three-fifths vote on it so that it would be ready for consideration in 1854, but their motion was never brought to a final vote. Yet the issue was not allowed to rest, for it appeared often in the campaigns of 1854 and was brought before the legislature of 1854-55, passing both Houses with more than the required majority. The Whigs continued the agitation for a convention, many of them evading direct reference to the free suffrage issue, others acknowledging the merits of the issue but opposing the legislative method of amending the constitution as setting a "precedent for continual tinkering with the Constitution by the legislature, keeping the public mind in a state of constant agitation on constitutional reforms, diverting attention from subjects calculated to develop the resources and add to the prosperity of the state; besides affording demagogues without real merit, hobbies on which to ride into office."[7] When the bill was again brought before the General Assembly of 1856-57 there was an attempt on the part of the Whigs to amend it, an

[6] *Standard,* December 15, 1852.

[7] *Greensborough Patriot,* December 12, 1856.

act which would have postponed free suffrage for at least another two-year period. But the speaker of the Senate, understanding the purpose of the Whigs, refused to entertain the motion to amend, declaring it was out of order.[8] The suffrage bill passed in its original form, receiving a unanimous vote from the Democratic members of the House and all the Democratic votes of the Senate except one. The final vote stood: *For*— Senate: 38. House: 98. *Against*— Senate: 8. House: 5.

The ratification of the free suffrage amendment at the polls took place in August, 1857. Out of the eight congressional districts a majority opposing the amendment was found in only one district, the fifth, in which were located the strong Quaker counties of Guilford and Randolph, counties which were strongly supporting the American candidates. Seventy-eight counties voted for the amendment and seven against it. The total vote stood 50,007 to 19,379.[9] The question that had agitated the state for nearly ten years had finally been settled. The *Fayetteville Argus* offered the following comment, in behalf of the disgruntled Whigs, as a final fling at the Democratic measure:

> The vote on Free Suffrage has been a very shabby one—showing that the people care very little about this "great measure of reform." The thing has gone through as every one knew it would—and we would like to know how much better off anybody is than he was before. Free Suffrage has answered its purpose: It has given Democracy the ascendancy in the State; and it may do the same thing for Agrarianism at a future day.[10]

But the Democrats were to have the last word. "We leave it to the *Argus*," declared the *Western Democrat*, "to reconcile the conflicting statements in the above extract, viz: that 'the people care very little about this "great measure of reform"' but, 'it has given the Democracy the ascendancy in the state.' That's a very singular effect of apathy and carelessness on the part of the people: that a minority advocating the measure should become largely in the majority."[11]

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[8] *Standard*, December 3, 1856.

[9] *Ibid.*, September 23, 1857.

[10] *Fayetteville Argus*, quoted in the *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), August 25, 1857.

[11] *Ibid.*

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS

A "judicious system" of internal improvements by the state had come to be an accepted policy of the Democratic party in North Carolina by 1851. One evidence of this change is found in the fact that all of the Democratic governors elected between 1850 and 1861 gave considerable attention to the issue in their messages to the legislature. When, in 1854, Alfred Dockery, the Whig candidate for governor, attempted to make the internal improvements question the chief issue of the campaign, the Democratic newspapers were careful to show a record of achievements for the Democrats in the matter. In referring to Reid's administration the *Standard* stated:

> The various works of internal improvements have gone forward as rapidly under his administration as it was possible in the nature of things they could; and to sum up the whole matter in a few words, the Democrats have shown themselves competent to lead in this matter, and under their auspices the State has done more in four years to develop her resources of all kinds, than had been done during fourteen years of Whig rule. These are stubborn facts. We regret to have to bring them forward, because they savor of party, and we desire now as heretofore to keep this question out of party strifes; but we are acting in self-defense and the blame, if any there be, must fall upon the Whig press and not on us.[12]

With the new emphasis given the internal improvements question by the Democrats, it is not surprising that the *Standard* expressed a desire to keep the question out of politics, for the Democrats were now assuming the position taken by the Whigs in the early development of the issue in the state. The Whigs were, however, to a considerable extent, taking the conservative position originally held by the Democrats. Regarding the attitude of the parties on the issue in 1856, the *Raleigh Register* stated:

> If there is any distinction now in the race between the parties in our State, it is that the Democrats have outstripped the Whigs—and have to be held in check by them. They seem inclined to push the good work a little too far, beyond the re-

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[12] *Standard,* May 24, 1854.

> sources which the old State can readily command and the bit has taken place of the spur. Democracy prances about like a young colt, and the staid old Whigs have to curb the wild thing with a stiff bridoon, to keep her from running away.[13]

An examination of the parties after 1850 discloses that there was some division in both parties on internal improvements. After the Democratic party had made substantial contributions to the cause by legislation and had been undoubtedly committed to the issue, a number of the prominent leaders of the party stood firmly against the tendencies of the time. Among these, perhaps the most persistent in his opposition was Linn B. Sanders, of Johnston County. He considered internal improvements an "alien doctrine," and while serving as a member of the House of Commons in 1854-55 and as a senator in 1856-57 he opposed every new scheme of internal improvements offered in the legislature.[14] His position involved him in a controversy with the *Standard* and seriously discredited him with many of the principal leaders of his party. In 1858, he made use of the *Register* in his controversy with Holden, and the *Register* supported him in his quarrel, facts which apparently justified the accusation that Sanders had joined with the enemy and brought to a close his political career.[15]

Another Democrat whose attitude on internal improvements subjected him to considerable criticism as well as some commendation was Asa Biggs. While Biggs was accused on more than one occasion of opposing his party on the issue, he was, in fact, not an opponent to internal improvements. He took a broad view of the question and favored only those projects that he considered of interest to the state as a whole. Above all he despised "log rolling" and consistently refused to enter into the trades that were attempted or accomplished while he was a member of the General Assembly.[16] Thomas Ruffin, a judge who would scarcely be classed as a politician, expressed the opinion that Biggs was "more sagacious and practically wise, as well as cautious" on questions of internal improvements than most of his associates.[17] A severe test came to Biggs after he had been elected to the United States Senate by the General Assembly of 1854-55. He remained a member of the legislature until the close of the session and many of his friends who had supported him for the Senate appealed to him to give his vote for pet schemes of internal improvements, reminding him that he was about to retire from the legislature and would therefore run no risk of injuring himself politically with his constituency.[18] How he met the temptation can best be told in his own words:

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[13] *Raleigh Register,* Sept. 10, 1856.

[14] *Standard,* May 27, 1857.

[15] *Raleigh Register,* July 12, 1858.

[16] *Autobiography,* pp. 18, 19. See also *Standard,* January 27, 1855.

> I have been as you have seen, no doubt, very much embarrassed by the Internal Improvement question. I have adhered, however, to my old position *of doing what I thought was right.* At one time I was looked upon with coolness, by some of my democratic friends with indignation, but the sober second thought has returned upon many of them and my position and prudence has been recently much approved, and I feel sure upon reflection many who at one time condemned will approve. For a week or two there was a perfect mania here, and we have certainly gone to great excess. My hope is that individual subscription cannot be obtained and thereby the state will be saved, with the present debt, that authorized presently and in prospectus will amount to over 12 millions—an enormous debt![19]

The acts of the Democratic legislatures of North Carolina between 1850 and 1861 present a varied record on the issue of internal improvements. As has been stated elsewhere, the General Assembly of 1850-51 was decidedly reactionary on the issue as a result of the liberal policies that had been fostered by the previous session. Governor Reid called a special session of the legislature to meet October 4, 1852, for the purpose of rearranging the congressional districts. This legislature decided to dispense with the regular session for 1852-53, and remained in session after its special work had been accomplished. The session was notable for the extensive program of internal improvements inaugurated. A large number of turnpikes, plank roads, and railroads were chartered. This work was continued by the General Assembly of 1854-55 with special attention given to the extension of the railroads in the state. Sufficient interest was manifested in the various projects before the legislature to cause the *Standard* to suggest that there was "danger of extravagance—of going beyond what is prudent and wise both for the present and the future."[20] Holden and other friends of internal improvements were very well pleased with the acts of the General Assembly, however, for the work done was considered a great advance in the movement.

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[17] Thomas Ruffin to Joseph B. G. Roulhac, February 6, 1855, *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin,* II, 450-51.

[18] *Autobiography,* p. 18.

[19] Asa Biggs to David S. Reid, February 12, 1855, David S. Reid Papers, III, 365.

The spirit of reaction became apparent in the General Assembly of 1856-57. While certain works, to which the state was already committed, were given further aid, many bills failed to pass. The *Wilmington Journal,* dissatisfied because of the failure of the bills directly affecting Wilmington, was very severe in its attack on the legislature concluding that "God, in his infinite mercy, may forgive such legislation. We are but poor finite creatures, and cannot pretend to any such superlative virtues."[21] But if the General Assembly of 1856-57 was a disappointment to some on the question of internal improvements, the body that met in 1858-59 was a vexation to many more. Out of the 210 acts passed by this legislature, only seven related to state progress or state aided internal improvements.[22]

Three matters bearing on internal improvements which came before the General Assembly of 1858-59 stirred up an attempt to revive interest in the Danville Connection scheme[23] which brought considerable bitterness between the Whigs and Democrats in addition to aiding in a revival of an intense feeling between the East and the West. The championship of the bill by John M. Morehead, who was a member of the legislature, was, in a measure, responsible for the party feeling exhibited in the matter, inasmuch as he was so closely allied with the history of the old-line Whigs. The discussion of the Danville Connection scheme took up a great deal of time and the bill ultimately failed to pass.

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[20] *Standard,* December 13, 1854.

[21] *Wilmington Journal,* February 6, 1857.

[22] *Standard,* February 23, 1859.

[23] See *supra,* p. 126.

Another question that brought much division and tended to injure the Democratic party in the West was the question of "Westward Extension." The West, greatly interested in the extension of the North Carolina railroad system to the Tennessee border, was especially incensed because of the neglect of that work by the legislature. The feeling aroused may be judged by the following extract from the *Asheville News,* a Democratic paper:

> The Legislature has adjourned! for which let all the people be devoutly thankful.—After a session of three months, they have returned whence they came, "unwept, unhonored, and unsung"; followed by the curses of an oppressed, down-trodden, betrayed and plundered people. The people of the west have got nothing, but an increase of taxation. . . . There is one consolation at least attending this result: it teaches us that we have to look elsewhere than to the Legislature of our own State for sympathy and assistance. Our people have uncomplainingly assisted in paying for every railroad in the State, and now not only are we denied assistance, but positively forbidden to build a road with our own money!! An act not more tyranical led to the Revolutionary war; and this will lead to a peaceful revolution, quite as potent in remedying the evil.[24]

The *Wilmington Journal* challenged this attitude of the *Asheville News,* chiding the *News* for the threat of secession and stating that one reason for the failure of Westward Extension was the fact that the leaders of the West were divided on the issue and could not agree on a route. A controversy followed between these two papers that further imperiled the Democratic party in the West.

A third party dissension bearing on internal improvements that came out of the legislature of 1858-59 was the Worth-Fisher controversy. Jonathan Worth, a Whig member of the state Senate, made a report to the legislature on the management of the Western North Carolina Railroad in which the president of the board of directors of the road, Charles Fisher, was accused of gross inefficiency in his business methods and general management of the road. Fisher's appointment to the presidency of the railroad had come as a reward from the Democratic party, and consequently the controversy was made a party matter and considerable animosity was stirred up. When the question of his reëlection came before the legislature he was reëlected by a large majority. It was no surprise that the Democrats should have supported him, but it was a matter of much chagrin to Worth and his friends that many Whigs, including John M. Morehead, supported Fisher.[25] Worth continued the fight for a time, but Fisher considered his election a vindication, and the public soon lost interest in the controversy.

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[24] *Asheville News,* February 24, 1859.

With the national crisis in 1860 the whole question of internal improvements was naturally pushed into the background. How much further the Democrats would have carried the question had conditions remained normal, it is, of course, impossible to state. But, during the last decade before the Civil War, one danger was already sufficiently apparent to cripple the issue seriously. More and more petty local schemes, calling for considerable "log rolling," were bringing discredit to the whole question. Before such discredit was established, however, the development of internal improvements under the leadership of the Democratic party was sufficient to establish the fact that the party had been a very important agency in bringing about a great advancement of transportation facilities in North Carolina.

PUBLIC LANDS

Agitation over the question of the disposal of public lands by the national government had subsided after the General Assembly of 1840-41, and little was heard of the issue for a number of years. During the early part of the last decade preceding the Civil War the issue began to reappear with noticeable frequency in the political discussions conducted in the state, and by 1857 it again came to be a major issue between the parties. In 1852 the *Standard* made the following statement of the policy of the Democratic party on distribution: "The policy of the Democratic-Republican party has been to dispose of these lands at fair prices to actual settlers, and to place the proceeds thereof in the Federal Treasury, to be applied to the payment of the public debt, or to meet the current expenses of the common government."[26] When, in 1857, the issue became more pressing the *Standard* went to considerable pains to establish clearly the logic of the attitude of the Democrats on public lands. The following extract will serve to illustrate the type of editorials appearing on the question in the Democratic organ and will also give a representative view of the party on the matter:

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[25] Jonathan Worth to D. F. Caldwell, July 20, 1859, *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth,* Vol. I.

> These lands belong to the general government, and not to the State in their separate capacity. Like property acquired by a firm or partnership, they are to be managed by the agents or directors of the partnership for the benefit of all. Through and by the general government, the States are engaged in the great business of self government, and of common protection and defense. They have put certain property into the firm to meet and "defray the general charge and expenditure"; and this property thus contributed, failing to meet this charge and expenditure, they resort to calls on the pockets of their citizens, in the shape of tariff-taxes, to make up the deficiency. We would have the government retain title to these lands, sell them to actual settlers at a fair price, and put the proceeds in a common treasury. If the net proceeds should be five millions of dollars per annum, we would reduce the tariff-taxes just five millions; and we would collect no more money than was necessary for an economical and proper administration of the government. We say proper as well as economical administration. We would not stint the navy, or the army, or the employees of the government.[27]

Most of the Democratic newspapers were in agreement with the *Standard* in their hostility to distribution. Among the papers giving considerable attention to characteristic Democratic expressions on the question were the *Wilmington Journal,* the *Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), and the *Western Democrat* (Charlotte). Two Democratic newspapers took positions on the issue differing from the views held by most of the party. *The North Carolina Statesman* of Raleigh indicated a desire to see the proceeds of the public lands go for internal improvements and offered the opinion that the disposition of public lands was a question about which Democrats should be allowed to disagree.[28] The *Milton Democrat* came out strongly enough in favor of a policy of distribution to become involved in a controversy with the *Standard*.[29] But such expressions as were issued by the *Statesman* and the *Democrat* were exceptional, for Democratic newspapers were generally harmonious on the issue.

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[26] *Standard,* November 27, 1852.

[27] *Ibid.,* April 22, 1857.

The introduction of "Bennett's Land Bill"[30] into Congress in 1853 made the question of distribution with North Carolina politicians a vital one. When the bill was voted on in Congress only six southern Democrats voted for the measure, and of this number, one, Abraham W. Venable, was a congressman from North Carolina. Venable wrote a defense of his vote, which was published in the *North Carolina Statesman*. The course of the congressman was immediately attacked by a number of the Democratic newspapers, and it soon became apparent that Venable's congressional career was at an end. With the exception of Thomas L. Clingman, the other North Carolina Democratic congressmen were "sound" on the issue, and in the campaigns of 1853, 1855, and 1857 most of the candidates gave considerable attention to the question.

In 1857 an unfortunate turn, for the Democrats, was given the distribution issue. Under the tariff act of 1846 the revenue increased so rapidly that in 1857 the government faced the crisis of a dangerously large surplus. In view of this a bill was introduced in Congress to deposit the surplus revenue among the states. All of the Democratic congressmen from North Carolina voted for the bill and the Whigs of the state immediately accused the congressmen of having committed themselves to distribution. Congressman L. O'B. Branch, in a letter to his constituency on the matter, explained that there was a difference between distribution and deposit. This opinion was concurred in by the *Standard,* Holden taking great care to make clear the difference, as the following editorial will indicate:

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[28] *Raleigh Register*, January 11, 1854.

[29] *Standard*, October 5, 1853.

[30] A bill introduced into Congress by Henry Bennett of New York. The bill provided for a distribution of public lands between the new and old states in a ratio of two to one in favor of the new states. Such an arrangement would have given North Carolina 1,650,000 acres. See Appendix to *Congressional Globe*, New Series, XXXI, 1054-61.

> This surplus revenue had unavoidably accumulated, against their [Democrats'] wish, and they felt they ought not to evade the question of disposing of it in some way. Those who voted for the bill of the late session, voted also for the reduction of the tariff; and they are in favor of a still further reduction, so as to avoid, if at all possible, an excess of surplus for the future. Distribution occupies a different ground. That is looked to by its advocates as a perpetuity—as a dispensation of money from the Treasury by almost every Congress—as a gift—as a "charity," so to speak, by the central government to the States. A deposit now and then—for example, every twenty years— would not seriously impair the independence of the States; but a perpetual distribution would, in the end, destroy every vestige of State rights and consolidate the federal government. The States would become mere pensioners of federal bounty, and the liberties of the people would be smothered in showers of gold.
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> Good Democrats, as we have shown, voted for and against the deposit act of 1836, and for and against the deposit bill of the last session. Gen. Jackson—the soundest Democrat, without exception, that ever lived—approved the act of 1836, reluctantly, we know; but he approved it. If the principle involved had been a vital principle, he would have applied the veto. He did not make the question a test of Democracy, but he did consider distribution such a test. No National Democratic Convention has ever expressed an opinion on the deposit question; neither has any State Democratic Convention as far as we know. North Carolina received her sixteen hundred thousand dollars under the act of 1836—used it, and is still using it, and will return it, if called for; yet no Convention of the Democratic party of this State has ever disapproved the act, or held it up as a dangerous precedent, or as a policy fraught with injury to State rights. No party test can, therefore, be made on the deposit question; nor, if it were made, would it be a practical question, for the tariff has been reduced, and the surplus now on hand will be exhausted, or greatly lessened in the course of a year or two. We may differ on the deposit, but we are all agreed on the distribution question. It is here that the opposition is seeking to make inroads upon us. Let us rouse up and confront the real issue.[31]

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[31] *Standard,* April 22, 1857.

The problem of a surplus did not last long. At the opening of the Thirty-Fifth Congress, in December, 1858, the Secretary of the Treasury stated that "in consequence of the sudden and unforeseen commercial revulsion the means of the Government were insufficient for the demands upon it"; he, therefore, recommended that Congress authorize him to borrow twenty million dollars to meet the current expenses of the Government.[32] In view of this situation Congressman Branch had material for a very convincing address to his constituency, opposing distribution, in 1858.[33]

The issue of distribution played a prominent part in the local politics of North Carolina. A resolution was introduced in the legislature of 1850-51 requesting that the North Carolina "Senators and Representatives in Congress make application in that body for an appropriation to the state of a fair and equitable portion of the public lands, which, when so appropriated shall be applied to the purposes of internal improvements and public education, in relief of the Treasury and public burdens, to that amount."[34] These resolutions passed the House of Commons, where there was a Democratic majority, but they were defeated by a decided majority in the Democratic Senate.

At the Democratic state convention in 1852 a noticeable division among the Democrats on the issue of distribution became apparent. Duncan K. McRae, who was chairman of the convention, had, prior to the convention, announced his conviction that, in view of the squandering of the public lands, distribution would be a just and wise policy. In the party caucus of 1852 McRae again stated this conviction. The committee on platform included the following resolution in the platform submitted to the caucus:

"Resolved, That the public lands are the common property of all the states, and are to be held by the General Government, as a common fund for the payment of the public debt and other charges upon the public treasury; and, that we are opposed to any law for the distribution of said lands or their proceeds among the states."[35]

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[32] Appendix to *Congressional Globe,* 1st Session of the 35th Congress, p. 9.

[33] *Standard,* May 26, 1858.

[34] *Raleigh Star,* February 1, 1851.

This resolution, which was drawn by Romulus M. Saunders, attracted no attention in the committee, but when it was read to the caucus, McRae opposed it with a speech of much fervor. He offered as a substitute a resolution favoring immediate distribution. This rather extreme step created some excitement in the caucus, and a debate on the matter ensued. Finally, on the suggestion of Saunders the last clause of the original resolution was omitted, and in that form the resolution was adopted.[36] The party was destined to be further divided by this issue under the leadership of McRae.

In the General Assembly of 1852-53 General Saunders, the incorrigible Democrat, created a stir in the Democratic ranks by introducing a resolution in the House of Commons applying to the General Government for an appropriation of 500,000 acres of public lands, to be applied to opening Nagshead Inlet. Saunders' resolutions also expressed protest against granting public land to actual settlers; against partial appropriations of public lands, for works of improvement, to particular states; and concluded with the assertion that if partial distribution was persisted in, to settle the question the General Government should do justice to all the states by an equitable distribution of the lands among the states or by depositing with the states the proceeds received from the sales of public lands.[37] Of course Saunders was assailed by many of his fellow Democrats, the *Wilmington Journal* taking the leadership in condemning him for his "apostasy."[38] It scarcely need be added that his measure failed to pass in the General Assembly.

During the same session of the legislature that considered Saunders' resolution, a resolution protesting the squandering of public lands was introduced by J. B. Bynum, of Northampton. It stated that if squandering continued North Carolina would, along with the other older states, assert her claims to her rightful portion of the public domain. Bynum's resolution was supported by a number of prominent Democrats and was cited in 1857, as an indication of Democratic support of distribution, by Duncan K. McRae, just before he announced himself an independent Democratic candidate for governor on the distribution issue.[39]

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[35] *Standard,* December 9, 1857.

[36] James B. Shepard and Edward Cantwell to Duncan K. McRae, *Standard,* December 23, 1857.

[37] *Raleigh Star,* December 1, 1852.

[38] *Wilmington Journal,* December 3, 1852.

The most serious crisis faced by the Democratic party came with the candidacy of McRae for governor in 1857-58. McRae had announced himself for Congress on the distribution issue in 1835, but the Democrats temporarily rid themselves of this disturber of party harmony by procuring for him an appointment to a consulship in Paris. In 1857 McRae returned from France, and, according to the *Wilmington Journal,* "the years of his sojourn there have been like a blank—the stirring events which have agitated the country had failed to reach his ears—while the rest of mankind talked of Kansas, Nicaragua, the monetary crisis, the empty treasury, and the new loan, Mr. McRae begins exactly where he left off—distribution is still the panacea for our ills."[40] McRae's position was very satisfactory to at least one political element in the state—the Whigs, who had expressed the hope that just such a situation would be created as he was destined to bring about. Early in November of 1857 the *Raleigh Register* issued the following statement:

> As a party those with whom we have acted, and now act, are powerless. We are not in the field even; and the Democracy need have no fear now of doing what they know to be right. In the nomination for Governor, we hope they will allow their candidate, whoever he may be, to speak out for North Carolina and her great interests. We hope the nominating convention will impose no restrictions which will cripple his hands or his tongue about the public lands. We hope he may be allowed to speak and act as we are sure every true man and patriot feels, of whatever party, about our right to this large estate. But if this convention should unnecessarily and unwisely again insert that abominable plank in their platform, which will lose us the lands, we hope that some patriotic Democrat, whose feelings are right about this, and who has pluck enough to say what he feels, in defiance of party madness and tyranny will speak out,

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[39] Duncan K. McRae to William F. Dancy, *Standard,* December 9, 1857.

[40] *Wilmington Journal,* quoted in the *Standard,* December 23, 1857.

> and put himself in the field in opposition. Such a man can embody many noble spirits in that party who will act with him, and do right, whatever may be the consequences to themselves. They may love their party, but their love for their State is higher than that.
>
> We think we may safely say that the Whig and American party being *hors de combat* just at present as an organization, and deeming this by far the greatest matter of difference between political parties at the South, waiving all minor questions, would cheerfully and with patriotic ardor support any Democrat, having other qualifications, who would thus bravely prove that he loves his country better than his party.[41]

Doubtless the editor of the *Register* had McRae in mind when he penned the foregoing editorial; at any rate McRae complied admirably with the requirements outlined by the Whig editor. The *Standard* of December 9, 1857, carried a letter by McRae addressed to William F. Dancy in which the former outlined his policy on the distribution issue as follows:

> I propose that Congress shall withdraw all public lands in the Territories from sale for ten years; to insure land warrants in sections and quarter sections, etc., to the Governors of the several States according to their federal population, for two hundred millions or thereabouts, the number still remaining undisposed of in the land States, perhaps two hundred and fifty millions—which warrants will be subject to sale like the soldiers' land warrants, and located when sold by the purchaser. This plan will get rid of the difficulty about one sovereign holding domain in the limits of another, and about the taxation of these lands by the States in which they lie, for the title will remain in the general government till the location.
>
> The Treasurers of the several States will hold the warrants in market, and no new officer will be needed. By this means immigration will be confined to the States, and our population prevented from scattering over the wilderness. Thus the necessity of expensive territorial government will be avoided—the larger expenses of the Department of the Interior may be reduced: and what is of vital importance to us, the present near equilibrium of the Senate will not be disturbed by the continued introduction of free States.[42]

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[41] *Raleigh Register,* November, 1857.

[42] D. K. McRae to Wm. F. Dancy, *Standard,* December 9, 1857.

Holden made full use of his editorial adroitness in his fight against McRae, who "took the stump" in January, 1858, in behalf of his distribution plan. While McRae had not announced his candidacy at this time, his hesitancy was probably due to the fact that Walter F. Leak, another Democrat who favored distribution, had avowed his candidacy. In February, 1858, Leak withdrew from the campaign and shortly thereafter McRae announced his candidacy, receiving the Whig support. The Democratic platform adopted by the state convention in 1858, contained an unequivocal condemnation of distribution. McRae's candidacy, therefore, made the question the major issue of the gubernatorial campaign, and his defeat, together with the pressing issues of slavery and secession, brought to a close the agitation over the question.

Another phase of the public lands question that received some attention in North Carolina was the homestead issue. While Andrew Johnson was one of the chief agitators in behalf of a homestead law, the bill was not looked upon with favor by the southern political leaders, who considered it a dangerous move designed to benefit the New England Emigration Society.[43] In North Carolina it was clear that neither the Democrats nor the Whigs favored the measure, but the Democrats were embarrassed by it. This embarrassment was due to the fact that certain national Democratic leaders, who were popular in North Carolina, favored the homestead policy. The position of Stephen A. Douglas and Andrew Johnson especially seems to have given the party trouble. Regarding the former the *Register* stated that a majority of the Democrats of the state were pressing his claims for the presidency[44] "in the face of the fact that he favors the Homestead bill and others granting lands to particular states—a man who has done more than any one living to establish and perpetuate that 'unjust, unequal and impolitic' system."[45] Holden was a great admirer of Andrew Johnson, and while the Democratic editor was decidedly opposed to the homestead principle, he did not attack the issue with his usual vigor. The *Register* was quick to notice this and continually chided the *Standard* over "Citizen" Holden's love for "Andy" and his inconsistency on the land issue. The favorable attitude taken by the *Washington Union* in 1854 gave the Democrats of the state further reason to remain silent on the question.

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[43] T. C. Smith, *Parties and Slavery*, p. 241.

[44] This statement of the *Register* is most probably an exaggeration.

[45] *Raleigh Register*, May 27, 1854.

It would not be correct to conclude, however, that the North Carolina Democrats were all silent on the homestead issue. On more than one occasion Holden expressed his opposition to the measure. The *Wilmington Journal* was very positive in its opinion. In 1854 the editor of that paper made the following statement:

> As for the Homestead Bill, we have not taken the trouble to ask who is for it or who is against it. We have examined the bill itself, and must say that we are against it unconditionally. We are fully of the opinion that the spirit of a people is degraded by donations from government—that no man who has either the energy or the industry to make a valuable citizen would take a homestead on the terms of the bill, binding himself to it for five years, under penalty of forfeiture and then having no power of alienation or transfer.[46]

Two years before this editorial appeared, the Bynum resolution, to which reference has already been made,[47] opposed granting of land to actual settlers. In 1858, David S. Reid took a prominent part in opposing the homestead bill before the Thirty-Fifth Congress. Doubtless the Democrats and the Whigs could have come nearer getting together on the homestead issue than on any other question involving public land—but, as usual, they dared not agree that they were in agreement.

BANKS AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

For many years after the passage of the independent treasury bill by Congress, the Democrats of North Carolina continued to include in their party platform a statement endorsing that institution. The national bank issue lost its importance after 1840, but occasionally a temporary revival of the question took place. In 1851, for example, the *Raleigh Star* carried an

[46] *Wilmington Journal*, May 8, 1854.

[47] See *supra*, p. 184.

editorial advocating the reëstablishment of the National Bank, which elicited from the *Standard* and the *Wilmington Journal* critical comments on the backwardness manifested by this Whig paper in advocating an "obsolete idea."[48] The financial crisis of 1857 brought another temporary revival of the national bank question. The *Standard* expressed the Democratic apprehensions in the following language:

> Notwithstanding these facts the Democrats have always shrewdly suspected that their opponents, if once elevated to power, would return to their first loves, and again saddle these measures upon the country—measures they pretended to have abandoned, merely because they knew their unpopularity, and the impossibility of obtaining power by advocating them.
>
> Recent demonstrations show that these suspicions were not groundless. Since the "panic" has set in we find the opposition papers, with that old Federal sheet, the National Intelligencer, at their head, again discussing the propriety of creating a U. S. Bank. As a crash has come, they think it a favorable time to present anew their old principles, long laid aside, and to attack Democratic measures heretofore silently acquiesced in, because of their impregnability.—They imagine that the fears of the people will be aroused, and that thev can excite them to a still higher pitch, and thus probably effect a change sufficient to put out the ins and put in the outs. But they will find their mistake. Gen. Jackson never left his work half done, and he sealed the eyes of that old monster, a U. S. Bank, too effectually for them ever again to be opened.[49]

The *Standard* was careful to give an analysis of the causes of the panic of 1857, stating these causes to be "over-trading, reckless speculation, and extravagant living, begotten and fostered by an undue inflation of paper currency."[50] The fact that North Carolina did not feel the ill effects of the panic to the extent that the states of the East and West suffered, doubtless accounted for the fact that the crisis did not play a very important part in party politics in the state in 1857 and 1858. A restatement of the traditional positions of the two parties on the bank and tariff questions was provoked by the financial crisis, but these issues were overshadowed by questions that seemed of more concern to the state.

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[48] *Standard,* October 22, 1851.

[49] *Ibid.,* November 11, 1857.

[50] *Ibid.*

Questions involving state banking and currency were made subjects of party dispute a number of times between 1850 and 1860. That there was still some division in the Democratic party on state banks is indicated by the following extract written by Asa Biggs to his friend David S. Reid:

> From what I hear a Bank at Plymouth will again be pressed and I am apprehensive some Democrats are strongly in favor of that measure. I am against the whole concern as the banking system is at present organized, and should therefore be opposed to it and particularly am I opposed to the multiplication of small banks. An instance has occurred in one lately to show its impropriety—The Bank at Elizabeth City altho prohibited from issuing bills less than $3, is now issuing certificates signed by the cashr of $1 & $2, which are circulating as money—I think the atto-Genl. has a right to file an injunction against them, if this is tolerated, we shall soon be flooded with shin plasters.[51]

The matter of paper currency occasioned several disputes between the Democrats and the Whigs. In 1856 the *Greensborough Patriot* stated that the farmers about Greensboro had lately complained because of the depreciation of the value of one- and two-dollar bills. The *Patriot* suggested that the depreciation was due to the Democratic legislation on currency and called upon the voters to take note of the results of Democratic legislation. The *Standard* replied that the bills which were "being gotten off at a sacrifice" were in all probability bills issued by the Greensborough Mutual Life Insurance and Trust Company, an institution that was doing banking business without legal authority. The *Standard* attempted to make this institution responsible for many of the financial ills in the state. The Democratic organ stated that this insurance company was "totally irresponsible . . . it has assumed the power of a bank —it has flooded the country with its paper—it has thus called on the people to credit it, to confide in it, to regard it as able and willing to redeem its issues; and now let the foundation on which this assumption rests, be shown."[52] When John A. Gilmer was the Whig candidate for governor in 1856 the *Standard* gave out this further statement on the Greensborough Mutual Life Insurance and Trust Company:

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[51] Asa Biggs to David S. Reid, March 10, 1854, David S. Reid Papers, III (1850-56), 323a.

> By the way, Mr. Gilmer is certainly the advocate and apologist of the certificates, or "shin-plaster" currency of the "Greensborough Mutual Life Insurance and Trust Company." His picture is on at least half the bills; and he no doubt holds that this concern has the right thus to bank. His opinions as to the sources from which a circulating medium should emanate, and also as to what constitutes a sound currency, will be found to differ widely from those held by the people of the State.
>
> Persons who may have in their possession the bills of this corporation, and who may be unable to get them off, without sending them to Greensboro' for redemption will have an excellent opportunity to obtain specie for them or current bills as Mr. Gilmer progresses in his campaign throughout the State; for surely that gentleman will not refuse to honor his own "image and superscription"—to take up the bills on which his own features are so handsomely and artistically delineated. But we will see.[53]

During the gubernatorial campaign Gilmer advocated a state bank to be based largely on state bonds and railroad stock. He was never very specific regarding a plan for the bank but expressed confidence that such a bank would bring into the state treasury sufficient funds to reduce taxes greatly. When Thomas Bragg, the Democratic candidate, was challenged by Gilmer on the issue, Bragg stated he "could not see how the people were to be benefited by any scheme of the sort—that he thought they had better pay their taxes to the sheriff than to bank officers swarming all over the country."[54]

However, a state bank was to be established under Democratic leadership. When the General Assembly of 1856-57 met there was a movement on foot to establish what was called the "People's Bank." Holden warned his fellow Democrats that there was no such institution as a people's bank—that the purpose of all banks was to make the largest amount of profit possible, whether the people were to be benefited or not. Nevertheless he saw the need of a state bank and suggested that such an organization be established with a state subscription of $2,500,000 and a private subscription, open to all classes, of $2,000,000. Holden justified the institution on the grounds that it would furnish a good circulating medium and would contribute annually to the state not less than $250,000.[55] Such arguments were not unlike the campaign material used by Gilmer. The bill to charter the "People's Bank" was objected to by many Democrats on the ground that the charter allowing large investments in railroad stock had a tendency to make the railroad stockholders the chief beneficiaries of the scheme and put the control of the bank too exclusively in the hands of railroad stockholders.[56] The bill to charter the bank failed to pass.

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[52] *Standard*, February 27, 1856.

[53] *Ibid.*, June 18, 1856.

[54] *Ibid.*

In the General Assembly of 1858-59 the matter of establishing a state bank was again taken up, and a bill was passed providing for the chartering of an institution conforming in a general way to the suggestion that had been made by Holden in 1856. The charter provided that the organization, to be known as the Bank of North Carolina, should have a capital of $2,500,000. Of this the Literary Board should take about $500,000 and the State University $200,000, leaving $1,800,000 to be subscribed by private individuals.[57] The arrangement passed through the legislature as a compromise, but met with the approval of most of the Democrats who were inclined to agree at all that the state should have a share in banking institutions.

THE SLAVERY ISSUE

When, in 1851, the legislature of Massachusetts elected Charles Sumner to the United States Senate, the *Standard* made the observation that "such a man would grace the gallows far better than he will the Senate of the United States."[58] Such a statement was indicative of the intense feeling that had developed in the South on the slavery question. The attempt on the part of the northern agitators to spread incendiary literature in North Carolina was met with bitter condemnations, threats, and even violence. There was evident fear exhibited by many in the state that agitators would stimulate rebellion among the slaves. An example of this uneasiness is found in a petition sent to Governor Bragg on resolution of a political meeting held in the fifth senatorial district in 1858. The petition requested the governor to devote his next message to the Legislature, to the special subject of laws that would check the activities of northern agitators in their "maddened unreasonableness and insane fanaticism."[59]

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[55] *Standard*, December 24, 1846.

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] *Ibid.*, March 9, 1859.

[58] *Ibid.*, April 30, 1851.

More and more the matter of incendiary literature came to be regarded with an apparently unreasonable fear. When the publisher of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sent the *Standard* a remittance to cover the cost of an advertisement in the Democratic paper, Holden published the fact that he had sent the money and letter back by return mail.[60] A former citizen of North Carolina, Hinton R. Helper, wrote *The Impending Crisis of the South,* a book condemning slavery as an economic curse, and thereby exiled himself from his native state. Congressman Biggs made an address in Congress calculated to show that Helper had proven himself an embezzler before leaving North Carolina and was a man without character.[61] The mere possession of a copy of Helper's book was a dangerous indictment against a politician in North Carolina. A number of Democratic newspapers felt that positive evidence of disloyalty had been established against John A. Gilmer, a leading Whig politician, when it was made known that he owned a copy of *The Impending Crisis.* The *Greensborough Patriot* attempted to retaliate by publishing the statement that the Democratic Governor, John W. Ellis, had a copy of the dangerous book. The *Standard* met the accusation of the *Patriot* with the statement that two copies of Helper's book had been sent to the Governor, and that he had tossed one out the window and was using the other to light his pipe. The *Standard* then turned on the *Patriot* with the questions: "How did you find out that a copy of this incendiary work had been sent to Gov. Ellis? Are you in correspondence with the abolitionists?"[62] The abolitionist sentiments of many of the Quakers of Guilford County, who usually affiliated with the Whig party, gave a damaging significance to the questions of the *Standard*.

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[59] *Standard,* May 26, 1858.

[60] *Ibid.,* June 2, 1852.

[61] *Ibid.,* December 28, 1859.

The development of the Kansas-Nebraska issue was followed by North Carolinians with keen interest. There was a general expression of approval by Democratic leaders in the state of the bill introduced into Congress by Stephen A. Douglas. The Senator from Illinois was praised by party meetings, and the *Standard* suggested that he was the logical man to be selected as Democratic standard bearer for 1856.[63] When the bill passed, the newspapers and politicians indicated that a great Democratic victory had been won.

The question of settling Kansas with slaveholders and those in sympathy with slavery attracted some attention in the state. Holden suggested that the field was "a most inviting one to enterprising and brave young men," and he suggested that a peaceful emigration be encouraged to give Kansas freedom from "armed bands of abolitionists."[64]

With the contest over the Lecompton and Topeka constitutions, the Democrats of North Carolina began to break with many of the northern friends who had been previously commended for their stand. Especially were Governor Robert J. Walker and Senator Stephen A. Douglas assailed for what seemed to many an inconsistent change of attitude. Regarding the latter Holden wrote:

> He has fallen—swept away by the strong current of anti-slavery, anti-Southern and anti-Constitutional fanaticism. If a friend now, he is an unreliable one. If a foe, he is a secret one. For our part we prefer an open enemy to a secret one—aye, we prefer him to a pretended friend in whom all confidence is lost.
>
> In our opinion Judge Douglas has put himself beyond the pale of the Democratic party, and sold himself to its opponents. We regret his course, but we cannot palliate his offense. He

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[62] *Standard*, August 10, 1859.

[63] *Ibid.*, March 8, 1854.

[64] *Ibid.*, March 26, 1856.

> was a strong man in the party, but if it cannot survive his treason, let it go down, buried in honor beneath the ruins of the Constitution. He has sunk because he could not command. The same feeling dethroned the first angel in Heaven, and turned him into a Devil.[65]

The *Wilmington Journal,* always a more conservative newspaper than the *Standard,* was not inclined to be as severe on Douglas as the latter paper. The *Journal* opposed the stand taken by the Senator but stated that there was nothing in his course that amounted to abnegation of principle or that would justify classifying him with the enemies of the South.[66] Notwithstanding this conciliatory attitude, Douglas lost most of his following in North Carolina, and the Kansas issue doubtless did much to bring many leaders in the state to view the slavery question with an uncompromising positiveness that made a national crisis inevitable.

While the hostility created by the Kansas-Nebraska issue was sufficient to make the slavery issue a paramount question in North Carolina, a number of other events and controversies added to the seriousness of the situation. One controversy that stirred up considerable excitement in the state was occasioned by the report that there was a "Black Republican" on the faculty of the State University. The report reached Holden and he wrote an editorial expressing the opinion that the schools in North Carolina should be scrutinized with a view to driving out any who might be found to be "Black Republicans."[67] This editorial was followed by a letter signed "Alumnus," written by a law student of the University.[68] The letter of "Alumnus" stated that there was a professor in the State University who was an "open and avowed" supporter of the "Black Republican" ticket. This announcement was made with a demand that an investigation be instituted and the professor be required to resign for the "honor and safety" of the University. Benjamin S. Hedrick, the professor under condemnation, answered these attacks on his politics with a long letter in which he justified his position in a very forceful manner. This letter was met with considerable hostility and a movement was immediately inaugurated to have Hedrick resign gracefully, if possible, or "kicked out" if he showed stubbornness in the matter. The latter course was taken after considerable excitement had been stirred up. Holden was the chief agitator in the matter, he being ever alert to make impossible free expression of opinion averse to slavery in North Carolina.

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[65] *Standard, September* 15, 1858.

[66] *Wilmington Journal,* December 21, 1857.

[67] *Standard,* September 17, 1856.

[68] Hamilton, *Benjamin Sherwood Hedrick,* p. 9.

Another affair growing out of the slavery controversy which tended to intensify feeling in North Carolina was the assault on Senator Charles Sumner by Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina. While there was a tendency on the part of the Whigs to regard the affair as an outrage,[69] the Democrats generally regarded the act of Brooks as justifiable in view of the provocation. The *Standard* stated that Sumner was "well whipped" and "deserved every lick he received."[70] An idea of the intensity of the bitterness that characterized the judgment passed on such men as Sumner by the Democratic newspapers may be had from this comment on the Brooks-Sumner affair:

> Language has no effect on such men as Sumner, Seward, Wade, and Wilson. It has been tried upon them by Douglas, Mason, and other Senators, and it has failed. They are lost to all sense of shame, and feel only when they are caned or kicked. We do not believe that they are honest,—they are too intelligent not to know that they are in error on the question of slavery; and our belief is, that they agitate the question, not because they really sympathize with the negro, but for their own personal advancement and gain. The hundreds of thousands of uninformed persons whom they are inflaming and misleading on this subject, are no doubt honest; and "more's the pity." This consideration but sinks them deeper among the venal, the corrupt, and the infamous agitators and demagogues who have in all ages afflicted and cursed mankind. Nor do we believe that these men truly represent their States.[71]

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[69] The *Fayetteville Observer* and the *Raleigh Register* were especially inclined so to regard the act of Brooks.

[70] *Standard,* June 4, 1856.

[71] *Ibid.*

The *Fayetteville Observer* criticised the vote of the Southern members against the resolution to inquire into the circumstances of the assault, and one of the North Carolina delegation answered the criticism with the statement that none of the delegation was opposed to an investigation, but the previous question was called and no debate was allowed on the matter. Such a course, according to the congressman, would have made necessary the acceptance of a preamble to the resolution, which contained assertions that were not true.[72] In answer to this statement the *Observer* expressed the opinion that it would have been better to have afforded the opportunity to prove the preamble false by the evidence brought out in the investigation.[73]

When Brooks passed through Raleigh on his way to South Carolina, he made a short speech. The *Register* spoke of the speech as being "undignified, discourteous, and ungentlemanly," and the *Standard* replied that the *Register* had proven itself a Sumner sympathizer.[74] The Democrats of North Carolina never lost their regard for Brooks, and when he died in 1857 Thomas L. Clingman delivered one of the principal eulogies in memory of the South Carolinian, in the House of Representatives.

The extreme positions of the South Carolinians, however, were not always upheld by the Democrats of North Carolina. For example, Governor Adams of South Carolina, in his message to the legislature in 1856, advocated a revival of the African slave trade and the *Standard* was prompt in rebuking the governor in an editorial from which the following extract is taken:

> Whatever difference of opinion may exist in relation to the justice and morality of such a trade, a revival of it is utterly out of the question. The course of Gov. Adams in this respect, will be made a handle of by the abolitionists for renewed attacks on slavery. As one of the organs of public sentiment in a slave holding State, we protest against it; and we ask the friends of the Constitutional rights of the South in the non-slave holding States to bear witness to the fact that the people of the South are not responsible for, and do not approve this recommendation of

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[72] *Fayetteville Observer*, June 16, 1856.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] *Standard*, September 13, 1856.

> Gov. Adams. We shall not discuss the question. It is, we repeat an impracticable one. South Carolina is, in some respects, a State governed by extreme and violent views.[75]

A little more than two years after the appearance of the foregoing editorial, a resolution favoring African slave trade was introduced in the House of Commons of the North Carolina legislature by a Whig, and the Democrats, by a good majority, went on record as favoring the measure. The *Register* opposed the resolutions and attempted to shame the Democrats, who were accused of "misrepresenting" the people of North Carolina by indicating that the people of the state desired the introduction of "wild and uncivilized Africans among them."[76]

The Dred Scott decision met with the hearty approval of the Democrats in North Carolina. There was a manifestation of hope that the decision would bring some peace to the disturbed nation, but the hope was largely based on a spirit of victory. According to the Democratic organ of the state, abolitionism had been stunned, faction and treason in both sections of the Union had been rebuked, and the Constitution had been restored.[77]

The indignation that spread throughout the South following John Brown's raid was fully felt in North Carolina. To the Democrats the "diabolical attempt" was inspired and promoted by "Black Republicans" and Abolitionists. Viewing the matter from the party point of view the *Standard* stated:

> One fact will strike the public mind with peculiar force, and that is, that not a single Democrat, in any quarter, has yet been implicated in the slightest manner in this diabolical attempt; while there is scarcely a prominent Abolitionist or leading Black Republican who is not involved. Garret, Smith, Giddings, Greeley, Seward, Chase, Hall and many others have aided or countenanced the movement.[78]

The attitude of the *Standard* on John Brown is characteristic of the general feeling in the state. According to the Democratic newspaper, Brown was "an intelligent man and a depraved villain, who had simply failed, as all others will fail, in attempting to carry out the designs of the Black Republicans."[79]

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[75] *Standard,* December 3, 1856.

[76] *Raleigh Register,* February 16, 1859.

[77] *Standard,* March 18, 1857.

[78] *Ibid.,* November 9, 1859.

The agitation over the Harper's Ferry incident by the Democratic newspapers in the state brought a protest from the *Salisbury Watchman.* This paper observed that the Democratic press was "determined to use the incident for electioneering purposes." The *Standard* denied the charge, declaring that care had been taken to avoid such a construction.[80] There is no doubt that the Democratic papers of the state had made a good deal of the fact that their Democratic brethren of the press in the North had denounced Brown while the opposition press of that section had either been silent or had sided with the insurrectionist.

In all this agitation, excitement, and bitterness over the slavery issue, one fact became more and more apparent: the South was being stirred to an intense hatred against the North that seemed to make a national crisis inevitable. According to a typical Democrat in North Carolina, the northern fanatics were meddling where they had no business, manifesting an ignorance of southern conditions, and wasting their sympathy on well fed slaves, who were "clothed, cared for in sickness, and when past their labor, comfortably supported," while the poor whites of the North were "dying by inches for want of active sympathy" and perishing "unheeded and uncared for by those who by the alchemy of trade turn their sweat into gold."[81]

AD VALOREM TAXATION

Notwithstanding the fact that the taxing system in North Carolina was inadequate and discriminatory, little attention was given the matter of tax revision until the latter part of the decade preceding the Civil War. At this time an issue of paramount importance was raised by the question of applying the principle of ad valorem to taxation in general, but with a special view to applying the principle to slave property. The constitution of the state provided that slaves between the ages of twelve and fifty were to be subject to a poll tax which was fixed each year, varying from twenty cents in 1836 to fifty cents in 1860.[82] If slaves were considered property, as was most certainly the case in North Carolina, then inequality and discrimination were very evident in the matter of slave taxation. An apparent inequality may be shown in the fact that no difference was made in the taxation of slaves that sold in the market for a low price and those that sold for a high price; for example, a slave valued at $500 and one selling for $2,000 were taxed exactly the same. An illustration of tax discrimination under the constitution of 1835 may be shown by these statements: In 1860, land worth $1,000 was subject to $1.50 taxes; the same amount of money invested in manufactures yielded $10.00 taxes; while a slave worth $1000 brought the government only fifty cents in taxes.[83]

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[79] *Standard,* October 29, 1859.

[80] *Ibid.,* November 23, 1859.

[81] *Ibid.,* February 20, 1856.

Leadership in opposing this discriminatory system of taxation was taken by Moses A. Bledsoe, a prominent Democrat of Wake County. In spite of the fact that he owned about forty slaves,[84] Bledsoe was convinced that ad valorem was the correct principle to be applied to the taxation of all property and he felt that justice demanded that slaves be considered no exception. He introduced an ad valorem bill in the House of Commons in 1856, but his party did not support the measure and it attracted very little attention at that time. Bledsoe was not to be discouraged and he continued to work in the interest of a revision of the system of taxation in North Carolina. In 1858 he was elected to the state Senate and made a strong plea for his measure which attracted more attention. In 1859 he found an ally of growing importance in the Raleigh Working Men's Association. This organization took up the ad valorem issue with enthusiasm and made it one of their most important political objectives. At the same time the Whigs were generally accepting the ad valorem doctrine, and the leaders of the Democratic party began to unite in opposition. Bledsoe was defeated for the Democratic nomination for the Senate in 1860 because of his support of the ad valorem principle; he therefore ran as an independent candidate and succeeded in defeating the Democratic nominee. He continued as a leader for tax reform, but the Civil War prevented the issue from being brought to a logical conclusion.

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[82] W. K. Boyd, "Ad Valorem Slave Taxation, 1858-1860," *Trinity College Historical Papers,* Series XI (1915).

[83] *Standard,* March 16, 1859.

[84] Wagstaff, *State Rights and Political Parties in North Carolina, 1776-1861,* p. 111.

Among other Democratic leaders who took a prominent part in supporting ad valorem was Frank I. Wilson. He was closely associated with the Working Men's Association, and as a newspaper man of considerable experience he gave valuable aid to the forces being marshalled to fight for the reform. The advocates of ad valorem attempted to give strength to their doctrine by quoting favorable comments by David S. Reid in his message to the legislature of 1852, but Reid had since that time placed himself clearly in opposition to the application of the ad valorem principle in the matter of taxing slaves.[85]

In the early stages of the ad valorem agitation, William W. Holden gave evidences of being decidedly in favor of the issue. When Bledsoe began his fight it was reported that Holden had told the Wake County representative that "he was all right on ad valorem," and "patted him on the back and bade him go on in his righteous cause, as the thing was bound to come!"[86] For a time, as the contest over the issue waxed warm, Holden expressed no editorial opinion on the question, but ultimately he came to the point of having to break either with the slaveholding element which dominated the Democratic party or come out openly in opposition to ad valorem. After a vain plea for party harmony on the issue, he placed himself in opposition to the vexing question. Holden's influence in the party was weakened by his vacillating attitude.

The leadership in opposition to the issue was taken by John W. Ellis, Democratic governor from 1858 to 1861. He was called upon in 1860 to oppose the Whig party on the question in the gubernatorial campaign of that year.

Most of the Democratic newspapers in North Carolina were definitely opposed to ad valorem. While the *Standard* at first attempted a neutral policy by opening its columns to both the advocates and opponents of the issue, it finally went over to the opposition. Three other Democratic newspapers in Raleigh assumed no uncertain position on the matter from the beginning. The *Democratic Press* expressed an aggressive opposition and waged an acrimonious warfare with the *Greensborough Patriot,* the chief Whig exponent of ad valorem. The *State Journal,* a paper established in the interest of the slaveholding element of the Democratic party and in opposition to the *Standard,* was a considerable force in opposing change in the taxing system. A third Democratic paper, the *Ad Valorem Banner,* was established by Frank I. Wilson with the purpose of being largely devoted to the furtherance of tax reform.

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[85] *Standard,* February 2, 1859.

[86] *Raleigh Register,* May 26, 1860.

Among the Democratic newspapers outside of Raleigh that were giving much attention to the ad valorem question, special mention should be made of the *Wilmington Journal,* the *Warrenton News,* and the *Western Democrat* (Charlotte). In 1859, the *Wilmington Journal* expressed approval of the principle of ad valorem, but opposed the application of the principle to taxation in North Carolina on the grounds that the plan proposed for the state was inexpedient and impracticable. As the contest developed the *Journal* became more positive on the issue and fought it with considerable vigor. The *Warrenton News,* with characteristic extremeness, gave expression to its opinion on the issue by stating that Bledsoe's advocacy of ad valorem was an encouragement of the "insidious approach of freesoilism."[87] The *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), opposed ad valorem because the principle was considered "impractical, unfair, and unnecessary."[88] This newspaper performed a valuable service for the Democratic party in the West by attempting to keep down the tendency toward division on ad valorem between the slaveholding and the non-slaveholding elements of the Democratic party. A characteristic editorial on this matter will serve to show how an important party paper of the West attempted to avoid division in the party along social and economic lines:

> If any non-slaveholder thinks that by raising the tax on negroes, his own tax would be reduced he is most egregiously

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[87] *Warrenton News,* October 21, 1859.

[88] *Wilmington Journal,* November 7, 1859.

> mistaken. Even if more revenue was raised by increasing the tax on negroes, it would not lessen the tax now paid by the man who owns no slaves, for just as certain as you increase the facilities for getting money into the Treasury, you increase the disposition to spend more, and the calls for greater and larger expenditures will be more frequent. . . . We know that the opponents of the Democratic party in the west are trying to make those who do not own slaves believe that if the tax on negroes were increased it would lower the tax on the poor white man, and to this extent they are arraying the non-slaveholder against the slaveholder. Now this is all wrong. Every man whether a slaveholder or not, is deeply and pecuniarily interested in maintaining the institution of slavery. The fact that one man owns slaves does not, in the least, injure the man who owns none. Both classes of property-holders are equally dependent upon each other, and whatever affects one affects both. Can a man who owns no slaves, but who owns valuable horses, cows, hogs, furniture, farming implements, Etc., afford to have a tax levied upon such articles in order to raise the tax on his neighbor's negroes? According to ad valorem both classes would be subject to higher taxes, and we do not believe the non-slaveholder is able to bear any heavier burdens; therefore we want him to understand the question in order that he may emphatically disapprove of Mr. John Pool and the whole electioneering scheme.[89]

A division between the slaveholding and non-slaveholding elements of the Democratic party appeared inevitable in 1859 and 1860. Under the leadership of the Working Men's Association, and egged on by adroit Whig politicians, a large element of the non-slaveholding class began to be conscious of political interest apart from the interests supported by most of the leaders of the Democratic party. The following reputed letter from a workingman in Raleigh shows how the spirit of group interests was being developed in a way that was calculated to disturb party unity:

> Is it no grievance to tax me, as a carpenter, five dollars on my wages of five hundred dollars, and not tax my neighbors two negro carpenters working at the same bench with me, one cent, although they are making for him as much as I make?
>
> Is it no grievance to tax the income or wages of the laboring man, and not tax the income of their employer?

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[89] *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), June 12, 1860.

> Is it no grievance to tax the journeyman Carpenter, the journeyman Shoemaker, the journeyman Tailor, and the journeyman Printer, and not tax the income of those who employ them, and who are growing richer by their labor?
>
> Is it no grievance to tax every State and County officer, and every other person, (except Ministers of the Gospel and the Judges of the Courts) from the Governor down to the Crier of the Court, whose annual total receipts and income, in the way of salaries, fees, Etc., amount to or are worth five hundred dollars, one dollar upon every hundred he received, whether he has a dollar's worth of property or not, and not tax to the amount of one farthing, from eighty to one hundred millions of Dollar's worth of slave property in the State?[90]

Such an attitude brought the accusation that the workmen were being used as tools of the abolitionists. This accusation met with a vigorous protest from the Raleigh Working Men's Association, and Frank I. Wilson framed a public address on the matter, which he distributed throughout the state, to the great annoyance of many Democrats, including especially Governor John W. Ellis. The *Greensborough Patriot* reported that Governor Ellis had an inquisitorial examination made of the Raleigh mail bags in order to learn for himself the source of the pamphlets sent out by Wilson.[91]

It would be difficult to state just how widespread the feeling between slaveholder and non-slaveholder became as a result of the ad valorem issue. But there can be little doubt that the issue did create a division of political significance between these elements of the population. This fact was made more evident when the issue of secession was being seriously considered in the state during 1860 and 1861. Kenneth Rayner, writing Thomas Ruffin on Christmas day in 1860, made the following statement of his observations on the matter:

> I was mortified to find, as far as I could ascertain, that the feeling in the section of Hertford, Bertie, Gates and adjacent country, was in a great measure in favour of the "Union at any and all hazards"—in other words, unqualified submission. I heard from several sources, that the people who did not own slaves were swearing that they would not lift a finger to protect

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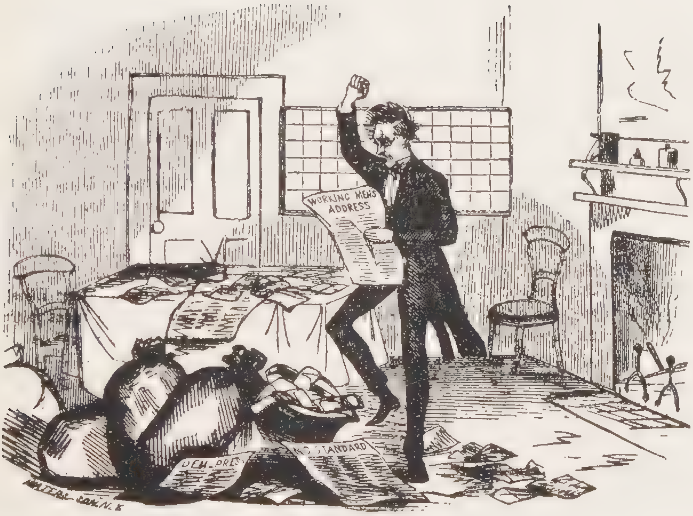
[90] *Greensborough Patriot*, October 28, 1859.

[91] *Ibid.*, May 4, 1860.



AMONG THE MAIL-BAGS!

The readers of our campaign paper will recollect the interview between Gov. Ellis and Mr. Fowle, on the steps of the Capitol, when Mr. Ellis declared that he had just been at the Post Office and ascertained that Mr. Frank I. Wilson had been sending off the Address of the Working-Men. The Governor was in a high state of excitement. Well, "Little Ad" is somewhat of an artist, and the above engraving is intended to represent the attitude and cavortings of the man what got among the mail-bags at the Raleigh Post Office. Look at the picture, and "phancy his pheelinks."

Governor Ellis accused in a cartoon from the *Greensborough Patriot* of searching the mail bags of the Raleigh Post Office for Ad Valorem propaganda.

rich men's negroes. You may depend on it, my dear Judge, that this feeling prevails to an extent, you do not imagine. You have no conception of the mischief done last summer, by the advocates of "Ad-Valorem." They infused among the ignorant people, the idea that there is an antagonism between poor people and Slave-owners—in other words Seward's "irrepressible conflict," was insidiously preached; and we shall, I fear, have to reap a harvest of trouble from the seeds of mischief then sown. I find that wherever "ad-valorem" was urged most strenuously on pure party grounds, there the feeling of absolute submission to abolition outrage and money prevails most strongly.[92]

In the gubernatorial campaign of 1860 the Whig candidate, John Pool, conducted his campaign largely on the ad valorem issue. He made special effort to win the western part of the state, where slaveholders were few, by placing his appeal on the basis of prejudice against the slaveholder's advantage under the existing system of taxation. The *Western Democrat* stated that Pool's arguments were "equal to Mr. Seward's 'irrepressible conflict' doctrine, and identical with the argument used by the author of the 'Impending Crisis.'"[93] The Whigs were fighting to gain back lost territory and to make new converts; they were therefore delighted at the prospect of splitting the Democratic party.

As might be expected, there was also some division among the Whigs on the issue. When this party was committed to the ad valorem policy, Kenneth Rayner, a leader of the Whigs, got in touch with Democratic leaders and pleaded that the Democrats come out strongly against the proposed change.[94] When the Democratic party by resolution in the state convention of 1860 opposed any change affecting the revenue of the state on the grounds that such a change would be "premature, impolitic, dangerous, and unjust," Rayner was highly pleased and supported the Democratic candidate in the election. Notwithstanding Rayner's action and similar action by a few other Whig leaders, the Whigs were far less menaced by division than were the Democrats. The latter party, being more largely the party of the slaveholder, was at a disadvantage, as the slaveholder was in a minority in North Carolina. Therefore when the issue that divided the population was presented, the advantage was apparently with the party taking the part of the non-slaveholding element. The fact that the Whigs made a gain of more than 13,000 votes is evidence of the value of ad valorem as a party issue. Had not the Civil War intervened, it is possible that ad valorem might have served the same purpose for the Whigs that free suffrage served for the Democrats at an earlier date.

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[92] Kenneth Rayner to Thomas Ruffin, *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, III, 109.

[93] *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), June 26, 1860.

[94] Kenneth Rayner to Thomas Ruffin, *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, III, 70.

SECESSION ACCOMPLISHED

While secession was not strictly a party issue in North Carolina between 1850 and 1860, the leaders of the Democratic party generally favored the right of secession and the Whigs usually opposed it. It was evident that the question was not of so much concern to the masses in North Carolina as to the people in the lower South. The fact that fewer than 28 per cent of the people of North Carolina owned slaves and the average number owned was less than ten, indicated that Senator Vance was probably right in the observation that North Carolinians "felt no great and enduring enthusiasm" for the preservation of slavery.[95]

The fact that the slaveholding element of the population of North Carolina dominated the Democratic party determined the general policy of the party on secession. Each Democratic governor serving between 1850 and 1861 made official statements on the dangers facing the nation and the possibility of the dissolution of the Union. In 1856 Governor Bragg caused considerable discussion when he invited Governor Wise of Virginia, Governor Adams of South Carolina, and Governor Jenkins of Georgia to meet him at the Governor's house in Raleigh. It was announced that the governors had been invited to North Carolina to visit the state fair, but the two governors who responded to the invitation (Governors Adams and Wise) left Raleigh before the opening of the fair and it became generally understood that the real object of the meeting was to discuss

[95] W. K. Boyd, *North Carolina on the Eve of Secession*, p. 168.

plans for action in the event that Frémont was elected president.[96] The only apparent result of the meeting was a new cause for controversy between the *Standard* and the *Register*, the latter newspaper characterizing the meeting as being held for the purpose of concocting a scheme of treason.[97]

Governor Ellis, who served from 1858 until his death in 1861, was naturally more active than his predecessors in promoting the policy of secession. In his message to the General Assembly in 1859 he recommended that the legislature appoint a commission to consult with the slaveholding states and that a convention be elected to consider such matters as should be reported by the commissioners. After the election of Lincoln, Ellis did all within his official power to bring North Carolina to the point of willingness to act harmoniously with the other southern states on the matter of secession.

A good deal of attention was given to secession in a number of congressional elections. Early indications of this trend were seen in the elections of 1851 when the issue dominated the contests of the first, third, and eighth districts. In the first district Thomas L. Clingman, a secession Whig, who affiliated with the Democrats in 1852, was opposed by a Whig who was against secession. In the third district Green W. Caldwell, the Democratic candidate, strongly favored the right of secession and was defeated by the Whig candidate, Alfred Dockery, who stood for the Union. In the eighth district, the Democratic candidate, Thomas Ruffin, was defeated by Edward Stanly on the secession issue. The success of Union candidates indicated that the masses of the people were not with the Democratic leaders in their agitation on the right of secession.

Among the congressional leaders the most persistent and consistent advocate of secession was Thomas L. Clingman. It was due to his views on Southern Rights that he left the Whig party and identified himself with the Democrats. In the United States Senate he allied himself with the extreme southern leaders and was very active in his attempts to ally North Carolina with the states of the lower South in the movement of

[96] W. K. Boyd, *North Carolina on the Eve of Secession,* p. 173.

[97] *Standard,* October 22, 1856.

secession. He was bitterly assailed by those opposing secession—especially his former Whig friends. One indignant Whig writing William A. Graham exclaimed: "If our liberty and property are to be trusted to such asses, what man of sense will long hesitate between perpetual government of this kind, and a sober, wise and conscientious monarchy."[98] The *Standard* was with him until Holden's "conversion," after which the paper became very critical of the Senator. The Whig papers generally characterized his efforts as "sensational work." On February 22, 1861, the editor of the *Wilmington Herald* received a note from Clingman which clearly stated the alternative that North Carolina would have to face. The note stated: "Neither Crittenden's plan nor its equivalent will be adopted. North Carolina must decide either to help Lincoln subjugate the South, or join the Southern Confederacy." The *Fayetteville Observer* made the following comment on the note:

> This is very positive—more so than a man who regards his character for truth would be likely to write. Why not wait and see what will or will not be adopted? And there is no occasion for North Carolina to make any such decision as Clingman pretends. It is all meant to frighten voters out of their wits.[99]

Of course Clingman was nearer the scenes of activity that were determining the fate of the nation and could better understand the approaching crisis; notwithstanding this, the comment of the editor of the *Observer* indicates how very reluctant North Carolinians were to admit that the state was destined to leave the Union.

The dominance of the Democratic party by the slaveholding element gave a considerable advantage to those in the party favoring secession. It has been shown how Holden assumed leadership in the agitation favoring the right of secession. It appears that he took this position because it was in harmony with the interests of most of the politicians of the Democratic party. Until 1860 he continued to give evidence of his belief that secession would be the only remedy if the radicals of the

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[98] B. P. Moore to William A. Graham, August 12, 1860, William A. Graham Papers, 1860-64.

[99] *Fayetteville Observer*, February 25, 1861.

North succeeded. Especially active was his pen in the presidential campaigns of 1856 and 1859. Writing of the possible success of the Frémont and Dayton ticket, he stated: "If they should succeed in this contest, as we do not believe they will, the result will be a separation of the states. No human power can prevent it."[100] In 1859 the attitude of the editor of the *Standard* appeared even more uncompromising concerning ultimate secession, as is shown in the following extract from an editorial written in November 1859:

> For one, we are not willing to sit quietly down and see the South destroyed according to the forms of the Constitution. Even if the black Republicans should be defeated in 1860, there is no certainty that they will be in 1864, or in 1868. "The Agitation," in the language of Mr. Calhoun, "will go to its end." That end, we fear, will be the destruction of the American Union. The Black Republicans are capable of any thing. When they get the power, they will both rule and ruin. We are as sanguine as most men, and we will hope as long as there is ground to hope. We do hope so far as 1860 is concerned. We think that the chances are that we will defeat them in that contest; but what of 1864, of 1868, of 1872, of the next fifteen years? Who can penetrate the gathering gloom before us? Let the South be ready for any emergency. Let North Carolina be ready. Let her be put on a war footing at the next session of the Legislature, whatever may be the result of the contest of 1860.[101]

In 1860 Holden's belligerent attitude on the dissolution of the Union suddenly underwent a change. On January 11 he stated: "If a black Republican or sectional President shall be elected in 1860, we will go with the South, we will stand side by side with the sons of Virginia and South Carolina, as our ancestors did at Yorktown and Cowpens."[102] After the election of Lincoln and the secession of South Carolina, Holden wrote:

> There is no sufficient cause at this time for dissolving the Union; and it is neither the duty or the destiny of North Carolina to follow blindly South Carolina and the "Cotton States."

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[100] *Standard,* September 24, 1856.

[101] *Ibid.,* November 30, 1859.

[102] *Ibid.,* January 11, 1860.

> The idea that North Carolina must go out of the Union because South Carolina is going out, ignores State will, State sovereignty, and State independence. It is not "the Carolinas" or "Carolina," but it is South Carolina and North Carolina.[103]

"What a change has come over the editor of the *Standard*," observed the *Register* along with a number of other newspapers in the state. Holden insisted that he had not changed in any manner. His defense of his course can best be given in his own words:

> In many of our issues of last year, long before the Charleston Convention assembled, we declared the South would never submit to "black Republican rule." We declare it now. But what is "black Republican rule?" Surely not the mere election of a man to the Presidency with both branches of Congress, the Supreme Court, and eight hundred thousand popular majority against him.—Rule means government. What we meant to say was that this State would never submit to the administration of the government on black Republican principles. We say this now. We have, therefore, been entirely consistent in this matter. But we go further and say that we could not foresee last year that the national Democratic party would be divided, and beaten because divided. If we used stronger language then than we do now, we did so fearing that the black Republicans might succeed in a fair and open contest; and if they had succeeded after such a contest, we confess we should have had no hope for the Union. But the Democratic party was divided and divided for the most part by such men as Yancey, who desired the election of Lincoln that they might have an occasion for disunion.—Facts which have come out since prove this to be so.[104]

Notwithstanding this "defense," there can be no doubt that the spirit if not the letter of Holden's attitude on secession had undergone a noticeable change. Several reasons may be assigned for the change. In the first place it is possible that the visit of President Buchanan to the state in 1859 had some influence on the editor. Buchanan made an eloquent and powerful plea for the preservation of the Union at any cost. Holden was impressed, as were most of those who heard the President

[103] *Standard,* December 19, 1860.

[104] *Ibid.,* December 12, 1860.

or read his speech, which was delivered at Chapel Hill. Another influence at work on Holden calculated to cool his ardor for secession was the division of the Democratic party in the state, which was becoming pronounced in 1859. More and more Holden felt out of place with the aristocratic leaders of the party who apparently had used the editor as a tool and then cast him aside. This element of the party, led by Governor Ellis, furnished the radical leaders who were attempting to accomplish secession. A breach between the Governor and Holden that grew into considerable bitterness naturally caused the latter to think less of policies now actively advocated by the former. The climax came when Holden went to Charleston as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. In Charleston he came to the conclusion that the radical element of the party, led by such men as Yancey, desired disunion and were seeking a means of obtaining it.[105] After the Charleston Convention, Holden gave more serious reflection to the possible culmination of secession and concluded that the secession of the southern states would be only the beginning of a process that would further divide the United States. He became convinced that the middle states and the lower South would not long remain together and that the time would come when economic differences would bring the "same difficulties that now beset the existing Union."[106]

After the election of 1860, Holden contended that the election of Lincoln was not sufficient cause for secession and advocated a "watching and waiting" attitude. This attitude he maintained until Lincoln issued his call for troops; whereupon the editor, under the caption "We Must Fight!" stated: "The proclamation of Mr. Lincoln has left the people of the border states no alternative but resistance or unconditional submission. The southern man who would quietly submit to the doctrines enunciated in that document, is fit only for a slave."[107] Holden was again on the side of secession and as a member of the secession convention took an active part in the work of separating North Carolina from the Union.

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[105] *Standard.*

[106] *Ibid.*, December 5, 1860.

[107] *Ibid.*, April 24, 1861.

In 1860 Holden's enemies in Raleigh organized the *State Journal,* a new Democratic newspaper which was largely devoted to the cause of secession and to vilifying the *Standard* and its editor. Holden accused John Spelman, the editor of the new paper, of being supported financially and morally by "fire-eating politicians" who were attempting to destroy the *Standard.* The editor of the *Standard* grew reckless in the selection of the epithets which he applied to the *Journal,* characterizing the paper on one occasion as "a sewer into which all bad passions, and all hatred against us are to be emptied," "the mouth-piece of scheming and mousing politicians," and "the slave of a clique."[108]

After Holden broke with the "Raleigh clique" he was assailed by a number of the leading Democratic newspapers throughout the state, including the *Wilmington Journal,* the *Warrenton News,* the *Charlotte Bulletin,* the *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), and the *Asheville News.* While most of the Democratic papers outside of Raleigh were more conservative than the papers at the capital, they generally stood for the doctrine of Southern Rights and ultimately for secession. The course of the *Wilmington Journal* may be cited as indicating the course of one of the most important Democratic papers outside of Raleigh. In 1859 the *Journal* expressed the following views on secession:

> It will be seen that we have made little or no reference to any mere abstract theories or doctrine. We have not discussed the right of secession, because practically, we attach little importance to it, and could not recommend its exercise. In certain contingencies, it may become the duty of Southern States, to separate from the Northern States—to dissolve the Union, not to secede from it, because the latter expression would intimate that the North constituted the Union, and that we in leaving the North, left the United States, they being the United States, entitled to the rights, prerogatives and properties of the United States, so far at least as the property of the United States is concerned. This we are not prepared to admit. We think that a more insane act could not be committed than the secession of any one or two, or three of the Southern States. Then indeed, all the advantages would be with our opponents. We

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[108] *Standard,* December 5, 1860.

> would permit ourselves to be ruined in detail. Any southern action should be taken unitedly and simultaneously, if at all. It must come in the form of a separation—a dissolution not of a secession. It must be taken by the States through their State authorities, not their congressional delegation.[109]

The suggestion by the *Journal* that the South should act together was followed by a plea that North Carolina join with the Confederacy when the states of the lower South began to secede. The editor of the *Journal* saw a danger in delayed action, and when he felt that secession was inevitable he devoted himself relentlessly to the task of attempting to create public opinion in North Carolina that would insure united coöperation with the other southern states.

The division of the Democratic party in North Carolina on secession was clearly in evidence in the General Assembly of 1860. When the question of a secession convention was presented, one faction of the Democrats, known as the conservatives, were opposed to the calling of a convention as premature and unwarranted by the existing circumstances, while another faction of the party, known as the radicals, were in favor of the convention and secession. Two reports were presented to the legislature of 1860 on federal relations. The majority report favored a state convention and the sending of commissioners to the other southern states in order to secure, if possible, united action among the states. The minority report opposed any move toward secession on the grounds that there had been no sufficient cause for such action.[110] The radical Democrats supported the majority report, while the conservative Democrats joined with the Whigs in accepting the minority report. The legislature adjourned for a two-weeks Christmas recess before any action was taken on the reports. The secession of South Carolina, along with the uncertain conditions at Washington, added force to the position of the radical Democrats. Consequently by the time of the reassembling of the legislature a number of the conservative Democrats and Whigs indicated the belief that there was a growing desire in the state for a convention.[111]

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[109] *Wilmington Journal*, December 22, 1859.

[110] *Senate and House Journals*, December 12, 1860.

The uncertainty of the times and the division within the state doubtless gave rise to the desire for a definite expression of the wishes of the people as a whole. This condition made possible the passage of a convention bill which authorized the people to elect 120 delegates. The bill provided that the calling of the convention would be contingent on a majority vote of the people expressing a desire for the meeting.[112] When the proposition was put before the people, forty-six secessionist candidates and seventy-four unionist were elected,[113] while there was a majority of 661 votes against a convention.[114] The disappointment to the radical Democrats can easily be imagined. According to the *Weekly State Journal,* "foul play which will never see the light" had caused the convention to be defeated. This radical paper continued: "We are assured from several quarters that the old Know-Nothing party lines were drawn in secret, and the measure being regarded as a Democratic measure was slyly killed."[115] There is not sufficient evidence to sustain this assertion, which perhaps was not taken seriously by most Democrats. The *Wilmington Journal* made a more accurate analysis of the immediate causes for the defeat of the convention. This paper declared that the majority of the people in North Carolina still hoped there would ultimately be an adjustment of the differences between the two sections.[116] It seems clear that the masses of North Carolina were still unwilling to secede, and that they distrusted a convention in a period so filled with uncertainty.

In spite of disappointment, the secession element in North Carolina was by no means discouraged. With renewed vigor the radicals became the aggressive element in the state, and much was done to prepare public opinion for the final step.

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[111] Wagstaff, *State Rights and Political Parties in North Carolina, 1776-1861,* p. 132.

[112] *Senate Journal,* 1860-61, p. 206; *House Journal,* 1860-61, p. 374.

[113] *Wilmington Daily Journal,* March 13, 1861.

[114] *North Carolina Manual,* p. 1015.

[115] *Weekly State Journal* (Raleigh), March 13, 1861.

[116] *Wilmington Journal,* March 16, 1861.

Governor Ellis was no less eager than formerly to act with the radicals, but he had the good sense to await events. On April 13 Fort Sumter fell, and on April 15 a telegram from Secretary of War Cameron informed the Governor that two regiments would be required of North Carolina to suppress the rebellious states. On the same day that Secretary Cameron's telegram was received, Governor Ellis received a telegram from Governor Pickins of South Carolina making a final appeal to North Carolina to join with the lower South.[117] Ellis was now ready to act with the assurance that the state would support him. He called the legislature to meet in special session on May 1. The legislature met and passed a convention bill on the first day of the session.

Only twelve days were given to the campaign for the election of the members of the secession convention. In many places party alignment was entirely lost sight of in the campaign, while in other cases the conservatives, holding to the national theory of the constitution, became revolutionists, and the radicals, holding to the compact theory, remained secessionists.[118] The most animated campaign took place in Wake County, where two of the revolutionist candidates, Holden and Badger, were bitterly, but unsuccessfully opposed because of their former Union sympathies.[119]

The secession convention met on May 20, and the election of Weldon N. Edwards as president over William A. Graham, by a majority of seventeen votes indicated that the secessionists were in the majority. A clearer indication of this fact came when two ordinances of separation were presented to the convention, one representing the theory of the revolutionists and the other representing the doctrine of the secessionists. The ordinance of the secessionists was substituted for that of the revolutionists by a vote of seventy-two to forty. The secession ordinance was then unanimously adopted.

An examination of the former party alignments of the constituencies represented in the secession convention indicates that generally the revolutionists were representing those parts of the state that had given a majority support to Whigs, and the secessionists were representing former Democratic strongholds.[120] Following the secession ordinance there was a great deal of party spirit displayed in the acts of the secession convention. The *Greensborough Patriot* reported that in making appointments to office little attention was given in the convention "to fitness and qualifications, the main question being 'is he a Democrat?' " The *Standard* denied that the alignment was one of Democrats and Whigs, stating that, it was "not the old party spirit, but a new one which the times and recent events" had "engendered."[121] Yet there can be little doubt that the new alignment, to a considerable extent, had as a basis the old Democratic and Whig divisions, as is indicated by the following extract from a letter written by Z. B. Vance, who had been a prominent Whig leader:

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[117] Gov. J. W. Ellis Letter Book, p. 399.

[118] Wagstaff, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

[119] *Weekly State Journal*, (Raleigh), May 8, 1861.

> I am . . . in rather low spirits at the way things are managed at Raleigh. I see a pretty determined purpose there to carry on affairs under a strict party régime; none but Locos and secessionists will be appointed to the offices; the old Union men will be made to take a back seat and do most of the hard work and make bricks without straw.[122]

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[120] Wagstaff, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

[121] *Standard*, June 5, 1861.

[122] Z. B. Vance to his wife, May 18, 1861, Z. B. Vance Papers, 1827-63.

CHAPTER IX

CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS, 1851-1861

Campaigns and Elections of Governor and General Assembly, 1852-1860

Fourteen years of Whig domination in North Carolina were brought to an end by the election of 1850. For fourteen years the Democrats of the state had been the minority party; now they were again in control of the state government, and the approaching election of 1852 found the party stronger, more enthusiastic, and better organized than its adversary. It was with a grim determination to prove the permanency of their strength and to rid the state of "whiggery" forever, that the leaders of the party made ready for the campaigns and elections of 1852.

The state convention, which met in Raleigh on May 13, 1852, was conducted in a spirit of harmony and demonstrative enthusiasm such as had been seldom witnessed in the history of the party. Delegates from forty-two counties were present, the largest representation that had ever assembled in a North Carolina Democratic state convention up to that date. The convention was organized under the presidency of Duncan K. McRae, one of the strongest leaders of the party. A noticeable number of the most gifted leaders of the party were present and consequently there was no lack of "eloquent" and "stirring" speeches.

The platform adopted by the Democrats in 1852 was a document bearing all the earmarks of its party. The traditional Democratic doctrines were expressed on such national issues as the interpretation of the federal constitution, the independent treasury, the tariff, economy in conducting the government, the slavery question, public lands, and public debts. On the matters of state concern the platform gave special emphasis to the desirability of free suffrage and the advisability of keeping the existing basis of congressional and legislative representation.

The platform also heartily endorsed the administration of Governor Reid and recommended that the national convention consider Robert Strange as a candidate for vice-president of the United States.[1]

James C. Dobbin made the speech nominating David S. Reid Democratic candidate for governor. The spirit in which the nomination was received may best be indicated by quoting a member of the convention:

> The eloquent Dobbin arose, and all eyes were at once centred upon him. He said he felt that the Convention should not only respond to the action of the Democracy of the State, but to their feeling also; and as the party from the mountains to the seaboard had but one choice for the gubernatorial office, he would move that the Convention nominate David S. Reid by acclamation. The speaker's voice was drowned amid a spontaneous burst of enthusiastic applause which literally shook the walls of the old Capitol. When the storm of applause had somewhat subsided, Mr. D. proceeded to review the position of the Democratic party—to paint in glowing colors the patriotic efforts of Gov. Reid, whose devotion to the cause of popular rights and Democratic principles had secured for the party the proud position which it now occupies, and to show that, under his leadership, they had but to be true to themselves to place again the wreath of victory upon his brow. Every sentence that fell from the lips of the eloquent speaker was received with unbounded applause; and when the question was put to vote, it was received with a perfect hurricane of enthusiasm. The scene was indescribable. To say that it was unanimously carried, is unnecessary—for everybody knew that such would be the result; but the depth of feeling which characterized the scene can only be compared to the old ocean when aroused and heaving its billows mountain high.[2]

Few Democratic conventions have wielded a more wholesome influence on the party than did the convention of 1852. The delegates left Raleigh with a feeling of party pride and confidence in the future of their party. The editor of the *Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), who was a member of the convention, returned to Elizabeth City and gave expression to his party loyalty in an editorial which concluded with the following statement:

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[1] *Standard,* January 4, 1852.

[2] *Ibid.,* June 2, 1852.

> Altogether, the Convention was a decided triumph. Never have I witnessed greater harmony, great unanimity, or greater enthusiasm, than characterized its deliberations. Every member seemed inspired with a new zeal, and a determination to go home and work for the cause. For myself, I confess that I feel renewed in the spirit—that, in fact, I am a better Democrat—willing to work harder and make more sacrifices in the great and glorious cause than ever.[3]

Preceding the Democratic meeting, the Whig convention had nominated John Kerr, who began his campaign prior to Reid's nomination. The two candidates met in joint debate throughout the state after Reid entered the campaign. Kerr gave much attention to the national issues in an attempt to attach as little importance as possible to free suffrage, the issue to which Reid again devoted most of his time. The Whig candidate proved to be a more entertaining speaker than Reid, but the latter had the advantage of being able to present in a clear and unaffected way an issue that had already aroused the whole state.[4]

The results of the election gave proof of the popularity of Reid and free suffrage, the Democratic candidate having received a majority of 5,564 out of a total vote of 91,570. According to the *Standard* the gain of the party was due to three principal causes: (1) the confidence of the people of the state in Reid; (2) the strength of the free suffrage principle; and (3) the popularity of the Pierce and King presidential ticket.[5] There can be no doubt regarding the validity of the first two points, and as to the latter statement there is evidence that there was certainly some disappointment among the Whig leaders over the nomination of Scott.[6]

The victory was received with enthusiasm by the Democrats and was celebrated in both the state and national capitals. The Whigs had entertained a confident expectation of victory and,

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[3] *Standard.*

[4] *Wilmington Journal*, June 18, 1852.

[5] *Standard*, August 11, 1852.

[6] E. E. Lilly to E. J. Hale, September 2, 1852, Willie P. Magnum Papers, 1850-59.

The platform also heartily endorsed the administration of Governor Reid and recommended that the national convention consider Robert Strange as a candidate for vice-president of the United States.[1]

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The victory was received with enthusiasm by the Democrats and was celebrated in both the state and national capitals. The Whigs had entertained a confident expectation of victory and, according to the *Register*, the election had occasioned mortification and disappointment so intense that words were too feeble to convey it.[7] The Whigs were beginning to realize their predicament. "We need help or our state is gone," wrote one Whig to his political friend, "nothing short of a long, strong and continual *pull* will save us."[8]

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[3] *Standard.*

[4] *Wilmington Journal,* June 18, 1852.

[5] *Standard,* August 11, 1852.

[6] E. E. Lilly to E. J. Hale, September 2, 1852, Willie P. Magnum Papers, 1850-59.

The election of the state legislature was by no means so satisfactory to the Democrats as the election of the governor had been. While the Democratic majority was slightly increased in the Senate, the Whigs gained control of the House and had a majority of two on joint ballot. This caused much disturbance among the Democrats, in view of the fact that the legislature was to consider the matters of electing a United States senator, of the free suffrage issue, and of redistricting the state.

The Whigs faced the gubernatorial campaign of 1854 with at least one consolation: David S. Reid would be ineligible for reëlection. But the Democrats were to prove that they were not dependent on a single leader. Holden and the other prominent Democrats in Raleigh had made a careful survey of the field in the fall of 1853 and had concluded that Thomas Bragg would make a very acceptable candidate. These leaders committed the Wake County Democratic convention to Bragg, and very soon a movement supporting the selection gained momentum throughout the state.[9] By the time of the meeting of the state convention in April, 1854, there was little doubt that Bragg would receive the nomination, in spite of the fact that more than a dozen possible nominations had been suggested in various parts of the state. In fact Bragg seemed to have felt very sure of the nomination, for he met the Whig candidate, Alfred Dockery, in joint debate on several occasions before the meeting of the Democratic convention. When the convention met, his expectations were fulfilled by an unanimous nomination.

The Democratic convention of 1854 was proof of continued growth of the Democratic party. One manifestation of this de-

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[7] *Raleigh Register*, August 14, 1852.

[8] E. E. Lilly to E. J. Hale, Willie P. Mangum Papers, 1850-59.

[9] Hamilton, *Party Politics*, p. 166.

THOMAS BRAGG

velopment was the harmony that existed between the delegates from the East and those from the West. Some of the leaders of the East had been apprehensive lest western delegates consider Bragg a sectional candidate and oppose his nomination.[10] Such apprehensions were dispelled, however, when several leaders from the extreme West made enthusiastic speeches in the convention supporting the candidacy of Bragg.[11]

Another evidence of the growth of the Democratic party in 1845 was shown in the attendance at the state convention. There were two hundred delegates present, constituting the representation of fifty-nine counties.[12] There was also evidence of "new blood" in the convention. The *Standard* made special mention of the large number of young men who attended as delegates.

The convention was organized with Asa Biggs as temporary chairman and elected Abraham Rencher president. In addition to the usual statement of the standard policies of the Democratic party, the platform gave new emphasis to the national and state issues in upholding the Kansas-Nebraska bill and in expressing the desire to promote a more efficient system of public schools.

In the campaign the Whigs took an aggressive stand on internal improvements and distribution that met with sufficient favor to indicate that the election might be much closer than the Democrats had at first expected. Bragg's record in the General Assembly had shown him to be very conservative on internal improvements, and his record on this matter was paraded to his disadvantage by the *Register*,[13] while Dockery attempted to make the issue the dominant question of the campaign. The proposal to extend the North Carolina Railroad through the West was supported with vigor by Dockery but ignored by Bragg in the beginning of the campaign. Realizing the danger of such a position, Holden warned Bragg and suggested a course in favor of "Westward Extension."[14] The Democratic candidate then made it clear that he would support the proposal and

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[10] *Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), April 25, 1854.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Ten counties were represented by proxy, however, Holden acting for five of these. *Standard*, April 22, 1854.

[13] *Raleigh Register*, June 7, 1854.

[14] Hamilton, *Party Politics*, p. 169.

Thomas Bragg was unanimously nominated for reëlection by the Democratic state convention at its meeting in Raleigh in 1856. While there were not so many counties represented in this convention as in the convention of 1854, the delegation was much larger, there being two hundred and seventy-five delegates in attendance. According to the *Standard,* it was, "the largest, most harmonious, and the most enthusiastic convention ever held in the state."[18] Under the presidency of Jesse E. Shepherd, of Cumberland County, the convention adopted a platform which was quite similar to the platform of 1844 in most of the principles advocated. Due attention was given in the platform to the condemnation of the Know-Nothing movement, however.

When the Whig leaders accepted the Know-Nothing movement as a new medium by which they hoped to regain control of the state, they evidently felt that the prejudice of North Carolinians against Catholics and foreigners would be sufficient to give considerable momentum to the movement. The new party did develop a considerable prejudice among the voters of the state, but the prejudice was not centered on foreigners and Catholics, for North Carolinians had practically no contact with either of these elements and consequently felt little concern over their theoretical dangers. The real prejudice aroused in the state was excited over the matter of a "secret, oath-bound" organization that, according to the Democrats, was doing its work in the dark. So it happened that the Democrats used the Whigs' "thunder" in an unexpected way and reaped the greatest victory that the party had experienced up to that time.

It must not be concluded that the success of the Democrats wholly rested on the Know-Nothing issue, however. The slavery issue was now reaching the point where free speech on the matter was no longer tolerated, and Gilmer had acknowledged that he would not have given his support to the Kansas-Nebraska bill had he been a member of Congress,[19] an admission which caused the *Asheville News* to exclaim that Gilmer had allied himself with the abolitionists and would receive "the indignant response of the freemen of North Carolina from Cherokee to Currituck."[20]

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[18] *Standard,* April 23, 1856.

[19] *Ibid.,* June 18, 1856.

Never did Governor Bragg's conservatism fit better into a situation than into the campaign of 1856. He did excellent campaigning, and with the assistance of the well organized party machinery he was able to win the election with a majority of 12,628 out of a total vote of 102,568. The General Assembly was also won by the Democrats with a majority of sixteen in the Senate and forty in the House.

The *Register* bitterly complained that the Democrats had refused to fight the campaign out on "the principles of the American platform, but rather sought to divert the minds of the people from a consideration of them, by directing their attention to the forms and obligations which were in use when the American party was first organized."[21] It appeared to be distasteful for the Whigs to take their own medicine. "Our election here," wrote George E. Badger to J. J. Crittenden, "has resulted in a most disastrous defeat to us and an amazing triumph to Democracy—Our old-line Whigs behave like apes—have turned Democrats and have ruined the state—Heaven help us!"[22]

"In the hour of victory are sown the seeds of defeat" is a truism that might well be applied to the Democratic party of ante-bellum North Carolina. Conditions were unusually favorable for continued success to the party and might have remained so for a long time if "Caesar" had not become "ambitious." Holden, the outstanding Democratic leader, who by untiring efforts had so greatly assisted his party to its position of success, felt the time had come for a more substantial reward than praise for his efforts. He desired to become governor of the state. To what extent he directly promoted his candidacy it is impossible to say, but it is evident that he had made known his desires in the matter. On February 15, the Wake County Democratic meeting assembled to select delegates to the state convention, to draw up the usual form of resolutions and to express a preference for a gubernatorial candidate. In former meetings Holden had been conspicuous and usually he was one of the committee that drafted resolutions; but, doubtless according to previous arrangements, he took no part in this meeting. The organization, which was managed largely by friends of Holden, paid high tribute to the party services of the editor of the *Standard* and designated him as the choice of Wake County for Democratic candidate for governor. The chief speaker in the meeting stated that while he took pleasure in endorsing the resolution supporting the candidacy of Holden he was of the opinion that "the nomination could not exalt that gentleman—could hardly be a feather in his cap—but if he wanted the office, he was justly entitled to it, and in God's name let him have it."[23]

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[20] *Asheville News,* quoted in the *Standard,* June 18, 1856.

[21] *Raleigh Register,* August 27, 1856.

[22] George E. Badger to J. J. Crittenden, August 9, 1856, North Carolina Letters from the Crittenden Papers, 1827-68.

By the last of March, fifty-six counties had held meetings to consider the matters relating to the forthcoming state convention, and thirty-nine of these counties expressed preference for a candidate for governor. Of this number eighteen expressed preference for Judge John W. Ellis, a circuit judge residing at Salisbury; ten expressed their preference for Holden; eight designated W. W. Avery; and three named Judge S. J. Person as their choice.[24] A number of county meetings expressed an unwillingness to send delegates to the state convention trammeled by expressions of preference, indicating at the same time a confidence in the ability of the state convention to select a "tried and worthy Democrat."

Between the partisans of Holden and Ellis there arose a contest that threatened the unity of the party. A good many of the newspapers began to press claims of one or the other of the candidates, and in doing so there developed considerable division and controversy in the Democratic household. The *Goldsborough Tribune*, the *Western Sentinel* (Winston), the *Warrenton News*, the *Williamston Banner*, and the *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), led in the support of Holden, while the *Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), and the *Salisbury Banner* were most enthusiastic in support of Ellis. The *Wilmington Journal* attempted to maintain a neutral position, but it was made clear that the real sympathies of the paper were with Ellis. The nature of the Democratic newspaper controversy is sufficiently illustrated by the following editorial of the *Democratic Pioneer*:

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[23] *Standard*, February 17, 1858.

[24] *Carolina Watchman* (Salisbury), March 30, 1858.

> The Banner thinks that Mr. Holden's "claims" to the nomination are superior to those of his rivals; the Banner urges Mr. Holden's "claims." It undoubtedly has the right to do so. In its arrogance—we cannot use a milder term—it essays to deny us the same privilege. It is not satisfied with lavishing its encomiums upon its favorite, but it ungenerously attacks Judge Ellis, and seeks to cast a slur upon his services to his party and his qualifications for the position.[25]

Neither Holden nor Ellis entered into the controversy. The *Standard* was silent on the matter and was devoted largely to the political issues that would come before the convention. When personal attacks were made on Holden, he depended on the newspapers supporting him to come to his defense, as was the case when the *Greensborough Patriot and Flag* stated that Holden and Clingman had combined to defeat the nomination of Ellis. The *Asheville News* met this accusation with emphatic denial and characterized the statement of the *Patriot and Flag* as criminal, atrocious, and unjustifiable.[26]

It was with considerable satisfaction and merriment that the opposition press viewed a possible division in the Democratic party. Especially did the *Raleigh Register* get full enjoyment out of the situation and joined in the controversy with a half-serious and half-humorous zest that somewhat compensated the editor for the late losses that his party had sustained. Just before the meeting of the Democratic convention the *Raleigh Register* stated:

> Although not entitled to a seat in the Democratic pew, we have all along been a strong Holden man. We think that he is entitled to the nomination, and are of the opinion that it would be a burning shame, if one who has spent his life in

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[25] The *Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), March 16, 1858.

[26] *Asheville News,* April 1, 1858.

> making great big men out of the very smallest sort of materials, should be refused the reasonable reward which he now so urgently seeks. This we admit, may be a selfish view of the case on our part, as it is pretty generally known that if Holden is made Governor we are to be his Private Secretary. Still, however, we cannot help expressing it, nor can we help participating in the stirring excitement which prevails among the Holden men. We have been much stirred, and have agonized no little for Holden, but can now do no more for him than give him as much luck as sitting cross-legged for him will bestow.[27]

In November and December, 1857, several of the newspapers were in disagreement over the time for the state convention. According to the *Salisbury Banner* the convention should be called to meet not later than the middle of February. The *Standard* and *Asheville News* insisted that if the suggestion of the *Banner* was accepted, the West, due to mid-winter weather, would be "excluded from the convention as effectively as though they had no claims to be admitted."[28] As Holden was expecting strong support in the West, it appeared that there might have been some probability that the *Banner* (a strong supporter of Ellis) desired the elimination of the representation from beyond the mountains.

On January 8 the Democratic state executive committee met and decided that the state convention should meet in Charlotte on April 14. For some time there had been discussion on the matter of holding a state convention in the West. Therefore when representative citizens of Charlotte sent to the state committee an invitation urging that the convention meet in their city, the committee accepted the invitation after a full discussion of the matter. The decision to meet in Charlotte apparently was satisfactory to both Holden and Ellis factions, inasmuch as Ellis was a western man and Holden expected strong support from the West. The Charlotte convention proved to be the largest party convention that had been held in North Carolina during the ante-bellum period, there being 454 delegates who personally represented fifty-nine counties, while twelve other counties were represented by proxies. C. M. Avery, a young farmer of Burke County, was elected president of the convention. Mr. Avery had formerly been a Whig, as had a number of the prominent leaders in the convention. In fact, the *Raleigh Register* in surveying the personnel of the convention stated:

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[27] *Raleigh Register,* April 14, 1858.

[28] *Standard,* November 11, 1857.

> Renegadism was multitudinously represented in the Charlotte Convention, and was, in fact, as far as organization, resolutions, etc., were concerned, really in the ascendant. The President of the Convention, whilom, as we hear
>
> "Would cuss and swar,
> Rip and tar his hair,"
>
> If any body attacked the Whig party. Mr. John Kerr, who, on being introduced to us some years since, accosted us as "that glorious Whig," made the platform—a sort of scaffold on which his present friends would have hung him not long since. Mr. James W. Osborne, whose melodious notes, and charmingly sweet cadences, once aroused the slumbering zephyrs to waft the praises of the Whig party, seconded his brother renegade's resolutions. Mr. Henry K. Burgwynn, who, tired of his old party, as well as his mania for higher prices in wheat, irrespective of seasons and markets, has betaken himself to politics, and instructs a listening and anxious creation in essays over his own proper name, was the chairman of the committee to nominate officers for the Convention, and so on through a list of renegades formidable enough to elbow out the old sinners, and make them look like so many poor boys at a frolic given by the upper crust.[29]

The platform adopted by the convention was short, containing but four articles, which were devoted to a commendation of the administration of President Buchanan, an expression of high regard for the administration of Governor Bragg, a statement of general approval of schemes of internal improvements, and a condemnation of the policy of distribution of public lands or their proceeds.

Before the meeting of the convention, the *Wilmington Journal* had made a criticism of the manner of voting in previous state conventions and offered the suggestion that the voting strength of each county represented in the Charlotte convention be based on the number of Democratic votes cast in the respective counties in the last gubernatorial election.[30] This matter was presented to the convention and was adopted.

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[29] *Raleigh Register,* April 21, 1858.

A resolution making the nomination dependent on the candidate's receiving two-thirds of all the votes cast in the convention was introduced by W. J. Houston of Dublin County. This resolution was immediately followed by a substitute offered by J. C. Badham of Chowan County, which proposed to make the nomination dependent on a majority vote. A period of intense excitement and heated debate followed, which indicated that the Holden men were supporting the original motion and the supporters of Ellis were favoring the substitute. This was due to the fact that the Holden supporters, realizing that Ellis had a majority of the votes, felt that a two-thirds majority would give their candidate a chance to win the nomination.[31] While it was generally understood that the move was made with this object in view, there was evidence that some were of the opinion that the motion was made in order to defeat both candidates and to introduce a third candidate. In the course of the debate, however, Houston made it clear that he had not introduced the motion with the idea of making way for a third candidate.[32] The two-thirds rule did not receive sufficient support to be adopted.

The balloting in the convention resulted in the nomination of Ellis by a vote of 25,051; Holden received 21,594 votes and there was cast a scattering vote of 1,203. Forty counties supported Ellis and twenty-seven counties supported Holden. The defeated candidate received the vote of only three eastern counties, while nearly all the western counties supported him.[33]

"Holden serves as the ladder up which Democratic aspirants climb, and which, when the object is reached, is unceremoniously kicked out."[34] Thus wrote the editor of the *Raleigh Register* on learning of Holden's defeat in the Charlotte convention. In view of the leadership and party service of the Democratic editor, it is important that some inquiry should be made into the reasons for his defeat. Apparently the *Register* was right in stating that "the lawyers and upper crust generally were for Ellis, while the unwashed multitudes were for Holden."[35] The slaveholders did not fully trust the editor of the *Standard* and doubtless were prejudiced against him on the ground of his humble origin. Another disadvantage that Holden faced was the new voting rule adopted by the convention. This rule of giving each county a voting strength equivalent to the vote cast in 1856 meant that the eastern counties would have the largest vote in the convention, for the East had cast the heaviest Democratic vote in 1856. The large element of former Whigs in the Charlotte convention also militated against the Democratic editor's chance for success, for these Whigs certainly could not forget that in the past Holden had been their bitterest political enemy and that he had been more responsible than any other North Carolinian for the downfall of the Whig party in the state. Shortly after the convention W. J. Houston, in a speech delivered at a mass meeting of the Democrats in Wake County, stated, "The most violent opposition to our friend [Holden] in the Charlotte contest had come from recent converts to Democracy—an opposition which resulted in 'snowing under' the champion of Democracy in North Carolina."[36] Finally there was evidently some resentment among many Democrats who were willing to do honor to "Holden the editor" but considered "Holden the candidate" as one who had got out of his proper sphere in a desire to satisfy vanity and ambition.

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[30] *Wilmington Journal*, February 26, 1858. See also Chapter I.

[31] *Raleigh Register*, April 17, 1858.

[32] *Standard*, April 21, 1858.

[33] *Ibid.*, April 21, 1858.

[34] *Raleigh Register*, April 17, 1858.

Holden took his defeat like a gentleman. He gave a full and, on the whole, impartial account of the convention in the *Standard* of April 21, and issued this statement to his party:

> The delegates of the Democracy, in Convention at Charlotte, have nominated for Governor, John W. Ellis, of Rowan. It is a good nomination, and will receive my cordial and active support. Such an appeal, I feel sure is not necessary; but as I was voted for in that Convention, and lest my position and feelings should be misunderstood and misconstrued, I appeal to all my friends, in every portion of the State, to go as I do, heartily and entirely for his nomination. The nominee is

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[35] *Raleigh Register,* April 14, 1858.

[36] *Standard,* April 21, 1858.

> worthy; and besides, brother Democrats, we owe it to ourselves, to our principles, and to the cause of a Constitutional Union to present a solid front to the common adversary. Men die and pass away like the dew of the morning; but principles are co-existent with time, and must be maintained without regard to men.—Let the preferences and the passions of the hour have no sway over the great cause which is so dear and so important to us all.
>
> To my friends from every portion of the State, who stood by me at Charlotte, and who urged my humble name for Nomination for Governor—and especially to the gallant and indomitable Democracy of the mountain counties—I tender the homage and the thanks of a grateful heart.
>
> W. W. Holden.[37]
>
> Raleigh, April 16, 1858.

In addition to this letter Holden expressed the following opinion of Ellis in an editorial:

> JOHN W. ELLIS is a tried Democrat, an able statesman, and a worthy and deserving man. He has been identified from his youth with the Democracy of the State, and he has been true to its principles and to its organization from his entrance upon manhood to the present time. He will make a good Governor. We feel sure that all the great interests of the State will be safe, and will prosper in his hands; and we predict that he will be elected, not merely by a handsome but by a signal and overwhelming majority.[38]

In spite of the grace with which Holden accepted his defeat, the division occasioned by his candidature was destined to cause trouble for the party. The *Carolina Watchman,* a Whig paper in the home town of Ellis, stated that the nomination of their fellow citizen "may be regarded as unfortunate to the state, by the loss of a competent judge; and to the party, by putting in motion first a feeling, then a prejudice, and then a ball, which, in the end, will probably crush more than aristocratic assumptions."[39] The *Carolina Watchman* was correct in prophesying that the "feeling" would in the process of time develop into a "ball" that would crush. Sober reflection convinced Holden that there was bitter truth in the sarcastic and sympathetic observations of certain Whig editors. He *had* been defeated by the aristocratic element within his party. He maintained his poise in 1858—but could he afford to continue to disregard the fact that there was a growing breach between the aristocratic slaveholder and the Democratic artisan in his party? Holden was at the crossroads, and for a time he was at loss to know which way to turn.

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[37] *Standard.*

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] *Carolina Watchman* (Salisbury), April 20, 1858.

John W. Ellis, the Democratic nominee, was a "typical English southerner of the slaveholding class" who was "decidedly aristocratic both by inheritance and training."[40] He was well educated, having received his college education at Randolph-Macon College in Virginia and at the University of North Carolina, taking his degree from the latter institution. He was admitted to the bar in 1842. He served in the lower house of the General Assembly from 1844 until 1848. While serving in the House of Commons in 1848 he was elected a judge in the Superior Court, and served in this capacity until his nomination for governor.

While the Democratic party had been threatened with division the opposition party was much more demoralized. The election of 1856 convinced most of the old-line Whigs that the experiment of entering the American party would not bring success to the disorganized party. The opposition therefore faced the election of 1858 without leadership or definite plans. Henry W. Miller, the chairman of the executive committee of the American party, joined the Democratic party. A large number of the American and Whig newspapers led by the *Raleigh Register* decided to support an independent Democratic candidate, while a minor group in the opposition element, under the leadership of the *Greensborough Patriot and Flag,* were insistent on calling a state convention and nominating a candidate as heretofore. The appearance of a strong independent Democratic candidate supporting an issue that was agreeable to the old-line Whigs brought the disorganized opposition to unite on the independent candidate.

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[40] Wagstaff, *op. cit.,* p. 100.

It has already been shown how, in 1858, the issue of distribution brought out two independent Democratic candidates, Walter F. Leak and Duncan K. McRae, the former withdrawing from the race when he realized that he could not command a united Whig support and the latter entering the race with the assurance that he would receive substantial support from the Whigs.[41] In addition to supporting strongly the distribution policy, McRae opposed any increase of the state debt, contending that the taxes in the state were already too high. This position put him in opposition to internal improvements. Ellis favored a continuation of the policy of internal improvements, laying special stress on the necessity of completing the North Carolina Railroad by extending it to the Tennessee line. The Democratic candidate also took a decided stand in opposition to McRae on the distribution issue, contending that the principle of distribution of public lands was unlawful and impolitic, and was being used by McRae only as a "bid for popularity."[42]

The two candidates met in debate in various parts of the state, devoting most of their time to the two issues mentioned above and to various aspects of the slavery question. Considerable interest was manifested in the campaign, and while the relations between the candidates usually were cordial, at times they developed considerable feeling, and at Beaufort they actually had a personal encounter during their debate that caused much excitement but resulted in no injury to the combatants.[43]

The election was another overwhelming Democratic victory. Ellis received a majority of 16,383 in a total vote of 96,475. The *Wilmington Journal* declared that Judge Ellis had received an unprecedented vote that was more than complimentary,[44] while the *Democratic Pioneer* stated that the large Democratic majority was due to McRae's weakness and not to the Democratic strength. Ellis received more than a thousand votes less than were cast for Bragg, and this falling off, according to the *Democratic Pioneer*, was due to "the lethargy and supineness of Democracy,"[45] a matter that should be a warning to the party for the future. In the elections of members of the General Assembly the Democrats obtained a majority of fourteen in the Senate and a majority of forty-four in the House. In comparison with the elections of 1856 this was a loss of two senators and a gain of four members in the House.

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[41] See *supra*, p. 519.

[42] *Standard*, July 14, 1858.

[43] *Carolina Watchman* (Salisbury), June 22, 1858.

[44] *Wilmington Journal*, September 3, 1858.

By 1860 the opposition party had sufficiently revived to reorganize and again assume "Whig" as the party name. The bickerings and lethargy among the Democrats, the advancing of the issue of ad valorem taxation, and the conservatism in North Carolina on the issue of secession—all tended to give strength to the opposition and to weaken the chances for success of the Democratic party in 1860. The Whig state convention met in Raleigh on February 22 and nominated John Pool of Pasquotank County for governor on a platform advocating ad valorem taxation on all property. The Whigs entered the campaign with an enthusiastic confidence of again carrying the state.[46]

The Democratic state convention met in Raleigh on March 8, with more than three hundred delegates representing sixty-three counties. David S. Reid was elected president of the convention. The platform was largely devoted to the national issues of slavery and secession. The distribution of public lands was again condemned, further internal improvements were advocated, and equal taxation within the limits of the Constitution was endorsed, the last mentioned item being an attempt to dodge the issue of ad valorem taxation. John W. Ellis was renominated for governor and, in view of the approaching national election, nominations were made for electors and for delegates to the national convention.

National politics were naturally very much alive in North Carolina in 1860; consequently Ellis sought to take advantage of this fact by attempting to push national issues to the front in the campaign and thus to weaken the issue of ad valorem taxation. Pool was an adroit campaigner, however, and succeeded, with the aid of the Raleigh Working Men's Association and the Whig press, in keeping the issue of ad valorem in the forefront, during the campaign. Among the newspapers the *Greensborough Patriot* stands out as having done Ellis considerable damage by introducing a new campaign weapon—the political cartoon. These cartoons appeared weekly and succeeded in making Ellis appear weak and ridiculous in his fight against ad valorem.[47]

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[45] *Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), August 24, 1858.

[46] William A. Graham to J. J. Crittenden, Feb. 27, 1860, North Carolina Letters from the Crittenden Papers, 1827-68.

An unusually large vote was cast in the election of 1860. The total vote was 112,586, Ellis receiving 59,463 and Pool 53,123. Although Ellis won the election by a majority of 6,340 votes, this was 10,043 votes less than his majority in 1858. There was a considerable "shake-up" in the election of the General Assembly. Of the fifty senators serving in the legislature of 1858-59, only sixteen were reëlected, and out of the one hundred and fifty members of the House but twenty-seven were reëlected; thus there were only forty-eight old members in the new legislature.[48] The Democrats had a majority of twelve in the Senate and a majority of ten in the House of Commons. A comparison with the election of 1858 shows that the Democrats in 1860 lost two members in the Senate and thirty-four in the House of Commons. "We have given the Democracy a blow from which it cannot recover,"[49] wrote the editor of the *Raleigh Register*. All indications lead us to the conclusion that such might have been the case had not turbulent national affairs interfered.

CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS, 1851-1860

The introduction of the Compromise of 1850 into Congress gave national issues a new impetus in North Carolina, and consequently the congressional campaigns of 1851 afforded more than the usual interest. In the first district (the mountain district), the Whigs were still sufficiently strong to discourage a Democrat's entering the contest. The campaign was conducted between Thomas L. Clingman, a "Southern Rights Whig," and Burgess S. Gaither, a "consolidationist Whig." Clingman had opposed further increase in the tariff and was a strong supporter of Southern Rights. He therefore satisfied the majority of the Democrats; in fact the *Standard* stated "we shall rejoice at Mr. Clingman's election . . . he is sure of the entire Democratic vote."[50] The campaign was fought out almost entirely on the States' Rights issue, and Clingman was elected by a majority of nearly 4,000 votes.

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[47] For a further discussion of the issue of ad-valorem and the campaign of 1860 see *supra*, Chapter VIII.

[48] *Standard*, September 12, 1860.

[49] *Raleigh Register*, August 8, 1860.

In the second and fourth districts the Democrats had no candidates. J. P. Caldwell, the Whig incumbent was reëlected in the second district, and James T. Morehead, a Southern Rights Whig was not opposed in the fourth district. In the seventh district William A. Ashe, a Southern Rights Democrat was elected without formal opposition, although Warren Winslow, a Democrat who was not a candidate, received a small Whig vote.

The contest in the third district was waged almost entirely on the issue of secession. Green W. Caldwell, the Democratic candidate, was characterized as "an advocate of state sovereignty—a friend of Southern Rights and the Union, and a Republican of the old Jeffersonian stamp."[51] His Whig opponent stood for the Union at any cost and was ready to vote "men and money to the President with which to carry fire and sword into South Carolina." In commenting on the campaign in the third district Holden observed: "It cannot be possible that the people of such a district will elect such a man as General Dockery to Congress at a crisis like the present."[52] When the election was over it appeared that it *was* possible.

Two Democratic candidates sought election in the fifth district. Abraham W. Venable, who had served his district in Congress during the thirtieth and thirty-first Congresses, stood for reëlection on the Southern Rights ticket, and was opposed by a Union Democrat, Calvin Graves, who received the Whig support. Venable won the election by a large majority.

[50] *Standard*, June 25, 1851.

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] *Ibid.*

J. R. J. Daniel, who had been a Democratic member of Congress since 1841, sought reëlection in the sixth district, and for a time it appeared he would have the field alone. He was elected without difficulty over Henry W. Miller, the belated Whig contestant.

"Perhaps the bitterest contest in these states," wrote Horace Greeley in the *New York Tribune,* "is that against Edward Stanly, in the Eighth District of North Carolina. All the resources of personal hostility and public prejudice are employed against him, but—though our good wishes would be of little service—we earnestly trust Mr. Stanly may be successful, though the vote must be a close one." The *Standard* stated that comment was unnecessary in calling attention to the good wishes of "that infamous Abolition agrarian print."[53] There can be no doubt that Stanly did please the Whigs of the North, for on his return to Congress he received twenty-one votes for the speakership; all were from the North, except one vote cast by Dockery. Had Horace Greeley been in sympathy with the Democrats in 1851 he might have written the same comment regarding "personal hostility" and "public prejudice" in behalf of Thomas Ruffin, the Democratic candidate of the eighth district. Ruffin stood for the right of secession as a last resort in the national crisis, and he supported the institution of slavery without reservations. The Whig press was bitter in its denunciation of Ruffin, especially the *Newbernian,* the *North State Whig,* and the *Plymouth Villager.* Holden appeared considerably concerned over the conduct of these papers. "We have never seen anything like it," he wrote. "Avoiding argument, because they have none to offer, and going down into the sewers of slander and abuse, they have signalized themselves by the use of epithets toward their opponents which would disgrace any penitentiary convict who might utter them."[54] The campaign between Ruffin and Stanly was hard fought to the finish and resulted in Stanly's receiving 5,237 votes and Ruffin 4,968.

The Democrats had difficulty in securing a satisfactory candidate for the ninth district. There were a number of men in the district who might have given the Whig incumbent, David Outlaw, a close race, but they could not be induced to run. William F. Martin announced his candidacy as a Southern Rights Democrat a short time before the election, but Outlaw defeated him by a large majority.

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[53] *Standard,* August 6, 1851.

[54] *Ibid.,* July 30, 1851.

The new apportionment based on the census of 1850 gave North Carolina one less congressman than the state had been entitled to under the apportionment of 1840. The special session of the legislature called by Governor Reid in 1852 laid off the new congressional districts, and apparently there was little party hostility over the matter of gerrymandering in the work. Notwithstanding this the rearrangement made a very different group of districts from the old divisions.

Only two congressmen were reëlected in 1853, William S. Ashe, a Democrat representing the third district, and Thomas L. Clingman, a Whig whose strength in the mountain district (eighth), was unaffected by the Southern Rights views that closely allied him with the Democratic party. Ashe was opposed by two other Democrats, Duncan K. McRae and Walter F. Leak. Early in the campaign McRae was eliminated from the contest by being appointed consul to Paris. In the first district H. M. Shaw of Currituck County, the Democratic candidate, defeated the Whig candidate, David Outlaw, by eighty-seven votes. In the second district Thomas Ruffin was again the candidate. He was opposed by W. C. Loftin, also a Democrat, who ran as an independent candidate. The Democrats of the fourth district were also divided. Congressman Abraham W. Venable, who had been elected by the fifth district in 1851, found himself a member of the fourth district after the redistricting of 1852 with but two counties of the old fifth district. As he disagreed politically with Holden and other Raleigh leaders, and as Wake County was included in the new district, Venable saw little chance of being nominated in the district convention. He therefore announced his candidacy and spoke disparagingly of the convention method of congressional nomination. Shortly after his announcement, A. M. Lewis, a young Democrat of Franklin County, announced that he was a candidate for Congress from the fourth district. As Lewis opposed the policy of distribution of the proceeds of public land, a matter on which Venable had departed from the majority of his party, the *Standard* accepted Lewis as the official candidate of the district. The division of the Democrats gave the Whigs hope in a district that was overwhelmingly Democratic. Sion H. Rogers therefore announced himself as the Whig candidate, making the distribution issue the leading question of the campaign. The *Standard* put forth every effort to bring the support of the Democrats to Lewis and a very bitter inter-party warfare ensued. Something of the intensity of feeling may be judged from the following article written by a correspondent to the *Warrenton News*, a radical Democratic paper:

> Who, I would ask, conferred upon W. W. Holden the power and authority to pull down one man and set up another? Certainly, not the intelligent Democracy of the District; then, so far as you are concerned, he has not the power, or the authority to do either; will any be so servile as to obey his insulting mandate? Surely not. The man who does so, has never breathed the pure atmosphere of true and genuine independence, and is still in political slavery.
>
> A. W. Venable read out of the Democratic party! and by whom? by a man, who, in 1840, if he did not ride in Log Cabins, guzzle hard cider, and cover himself with coon skins and join in shouting "Tippecanoe and Tyler too," to the great annoyance of the then down cast Democrats, was at least a rabid Whig! Who ever heard of such a procedure, under such circumstances. This renegade Whig, now attempting to unrobe a man, who was born and reared a Democrat and has labored faithfully in the Democratic cause, during the many severe trials through which it has had to pass; especially in 1840, when the foresaid W. W. Holden, was doing all that he could, with tongue and pen, to demolish and scatter to the winds the very principles which he now holds so very, very sacred!!![55]

Toward the end of the campaign the *Standard* was almost wholly devoted to furthering the interest of Lewis and attacking Venable. Holden's efforts proved futile, for the election resulted in Rogers' receiving 4,201 votes; Venable, 4,134; and Lewis, 2,454.

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[55] *Warrenton News*, quoted in the *Raleigh Register*, August 3, 1853.

It was generally understood that the fifth district was so strongly Whig that it would be useless for a Democrat to seek election in that district. The Democrats, therefore, made no nominations, but a good many Democrats cast their vote for Abraham Rencher, who was not a candidate.

The *Wilmington Journal* stated in April, 1853, that the sixth congressional district contained a Whig majority of about a thousand. This statement would indicate that the Democrats had no more hopes of winning the sixth district than they had of winning the fifth. George D. Boyd, the Democratic candidate in this district, proved to be a strong man and gave the district a better showing for Democracy than had been expected. He was defeated by 385 votes.

One of the most interesting congressional campaigns of 1853 was conducted in the seventh district. There the candidates were fairly evenly matched, and more attention was given to a variety of national issues. Burton Craige was the Democratic candidate and James W. Osborne upheld the Whig principles. The Democratic candidate won with a majority of 316.

While the Democrats won the election in four districts and were virtually in control of the mountain district, the congressional elections of 1853 were far from being satisfactory to the party. In the first district there had been a noticeable amount of hostility manifested by a number of Democrats against the party nominee.[56] In the second, third, and fourth districts the party had been split by the appearance of more than one Democratic candidate in the field. Another matter that seriously affected the unity of the party was the division caused by the disagreement over the issue of distribution. Added to these troubles was a live and growing hostility between certain of the Democratic newspapers. Altogether, such matters seemed to indicate that the Democrats were incapable of coöperating for the best interests of the party as a whole when conditions were most favorable for party success.

The rise of the Know-Nothing movement gave promise of a lively congressional campaign in 1855. In the first district

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[56] *Standard,* July 20, 1853.

H. M. Shaw, the Democratic incumbent, sought reëlection and was opposed by Robert T. Paine, the Know-Nothing candidate. These candidates staged a personal altercation during one of their speaking engagements and were arrested and required "to enter into bonds to keep the peace."[57] The campaign was spirited throughout and resulted in Shaw's defeat by 354 votes. Two other Democrats who were members of the thirty-third Congress sought reëlection in 1855, Thomas Ruffin, representing the second district, and Burton Craige, representing the seventh district. Both these men succeeded in defeating their Know-Nothing competitors.

Warren Winslow, of Cumberland County, was the Democratic candidate in the third district. He was opposed by David Reid,[58] a Democrat who had joined the Know-Nothings. Winslow defeated Reid by more than a thousand majority out of a vote of more than seven thousand.

The Democrats were successful in two other districts, the fourth and the eighth. In the eighth district Clingman, who had finally gone over to the Democrats, was again elected. In the fourth the party was still suffering from the division of 1853. The friends of Venable were still active and went so far as to establish a newspaper in 1854 which was to be devoted to the principles advocated by Venable.[59] A district convention was held to choose a candidate, and it soon appeared that a "dark horse" would be necessary. George W. Thompson of Wake County was selected as the compromise candidate. The *Raleigh Register* was quick to seize the opportunity to point out that Thompson, while a member of the General Assembly in 1848-49, had opposed free suffrage.[60] In the meantime Thompson declined the Democratic nomination, and it became necessary to call a second convention. This convention nominated L. O'B. Branch of Wake, a nomination that was acceptable to the various factions of the party. Branch was opposed by James B. Shepard, one of the few prominent Democrats who had joined the

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[57] *Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), July 24, 1855.

[58] Not former Governor David S. Reid.

[59] The *North Carolina Statesman* (Raleigh). The *Fayetteville Carolinian* was very critical of this move. See *Standard*, January 18, 1854.

[60] *Raleigh Register*, April 25, 1855.

Know-Nothings. The Democratic nominee was a very capable man and won the election with a majority of more than 2,500 out of a total of over 11,000 votes.

In the fifth district the Whig incumbent, John Kerr, joined the Democratic party and was supported by the Democrats. He was defeated by Edwin G. Reade, the nominee of the Know-Nothing party. As was the case in the fourth district, the Democratic convention nominee of the sixth district, George W. Boyd, declined to be a candidate. A. M. Scales was then chosen by the Democrats and gave R. C. Puryear, the Know-Nothing who sought reëlection, a close race but failed to be elected.

Because of the disorganization in the opposition party the congressional campaigns of 1857 were the most encouraging that the Democrats had witnessed during the period under consideration. Ruffin, Winslow, Branch, and Craige were all reëlected without opposition. H. M. Shaw, who had been defeated for reëlection in 1855, was elected over W. N. H. Smith, the American candidate, by the close margin of thirty-eight votes. In the sixth and eighth districts, Scales and Clingman were again the Democratic candidates; the former was elected over Puryear, the sitting Whig member, and the latter was reëlected over Z. B. Vance. The Democrats lost only one district, the fifth, in which the Democratic candidate, S. E. Williams, was defeated by John A. Gilmer, the candidate of the American party.

In 1858 Congressman Clingman succeeded Senator Asa Biggs, who resigned to accept a place on the federal bench. The vacancy created in the eighth district caused a spirited contest. W. W. Avery and David Coleman, both Democrats, announced their candidacy, the latter having obtained from the most probable Whig candidate, Z. B. Vance, a promise that he would not enter the race. Vance later announced that he was a candidate, stating that he had exercised the personal privilege of changing his mind. Coleman thereupon withdrew from the campaign.[61] The Whig candidate was a strong man and a very attractive

[61] *Asheville News*, July 17, 1858.

speaker. He succeeded in defeating Avery and bringing the mountain district back into the Whig fold.

During the meeting of the General Assembly of 1858-59 the opposition party began to make preparations for a new organization. The futility of continuing the Know-Nothing, or American, organization was recognized. It was therefore determined that with the readoption of the old party name of "Whig" new party machinery should be set up with the purpose of entering the congressional election of 1859 and winning back losses.

The Whigs were amply rewarded for their efforts at reorganization, for they gained four districts in the congressional election of 1859. In the first district Shaw and Smith again were candidates, and this time the Whig candidate was successful. Thomas Ruffin, the sitting member of the Democratic party of the second district, was reëlected without opposition. In the third and fourth districts there were no Whig candidates but the Democratic tickets were divided; in the former Winslow was unsuccessfully opposed for reëlection by M. J. McDuffie, and in the latter Branch was reëlected over Linn B. Sanders. The same candidates that had campaigned in 1857 appeared in the fifth district, and with the same result, Gilmer, the Whig candidate, defeating the Democratic candidate, S. E. Williams. The Democratic representative of the sixth district, A. M. Scales, was defeated by his Whig competitor, James M. Leach, who won the election with a majority of over 900 out of a total vote of over 16,000. Burton Craige, the Democratic representative of the seventh district was again successful, being elected over the Whig nominee, S. H. Walkup. In the eighth district, Z. B. Vance again maintained his supremacy, this time defeating David Coleman by nearly 1,700 votes.

During the campaigns there was, as in 1855, evidence of considerable discord among the Democrats. For example: In the third district, the *Fayetteville Carolinian* and the *Wilmington Journal* quarreled feelingly over their mutually alleged disloyalty to the party candidate.[62] In the fourth district the *Standard* was engaged in a controversy with the *Democratic*

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[62] *Wilmington Journal,* August 1, 1858.

Press (Elizabeth City), and the *Warrenton News* over whether or not the purchase of Cuba should be made an important party issue. Branch was reputed to have stated that "he had nothing to do with the troubles and newspaper war in Raleigh" and that he "had not and would not countenance any clique or faction."[63] Holden protested, "respectfully but firmly," against the language used by Branch, at the same time stating that he felt he had a right to do so as one who was supporting the Democratic candidate and expecting to vote for him.[64] In the eighth district the *Asheville News* candidly stated that the Democratic candidate, Coleman, was not personally acceptable to the editor and that while the convention nominee would be supported, it would not be a first choice support.[65]

The issue between the candidates in 1859 had to do largely with sectionalism and distribution. In the eighth district a personal matter entered the campaign when Coleman took offense at Vance because of certain campaign methods used by the latter apparently with a view to intimidating and misrepresenting the Democratic candidate, if we may judge by Coleman's presentation of the matter. After the campaign Coleman challenged Vance to a duel. Vance accepted the challenge, accusing his challenger of desiring a quarrel in order "to take away some of the sting of his late defeat," an accusation that was added to Coleman's list of grievances in extending the challenge. Friends intervened and Vance was persuaded to write Coleman a letter explaining his conduct in a manner that was "satisfactory," according to the code of honor; thus ended what might have been a tragic affair.[66]

The elections of the United States senators in North Carolina during the last decade before the Civil War affords several examples of factional jealousies within the Democratic party of the state which proved detrimental to the best interests of the party. In 1852 the General Assembly prepared to elect a successor to Senator Willie P. Mangum, whose term was to expire March 3, 1853. The party division in the legislature was a close one, the Democrats having eighty-six members and the Whigs eighty-four. The election of a Democratic senator therefore depended on an absolute unanimity among the Democrats. In November the Democrats held a caucus with sixty-eight legislators in attendance. On the second ballot James C. Dobbin was nominated, receiving forty-five votes.[67] This nomination was later made unanimous in the caucus.[68]

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[63] *Standard,* June 29, 1859.

[64] *Ibid.,* June 29, 1859.

[65] *Asheville News,* April 28, 1859.

[66] The correspondence between Coleman and Vance on the issues and arrangements of the duel are found in the Z. B. Vance Papers, 1827-63. The correspondence took place on August 15, 16, 1859.

When the caucus nomination was brought before the General Assembly, several Democrats, under the leadership of Romulus M. Saunders, refused to vote for the party nominee.[69] This disorganization gave the Whigs much satisfaction, and, in order to prolong the election and further embarrass their adversaries, a number of Whigs cast their votes for Saunders. When it finally was apparent that no election would occur if the party nominee failed to receive the unanimous support of the Democrats, Saunders gave his support to Dobbin, but three of the Democratic "disorganizers" continued to cast their votes for others. Dobbin requested the caucus to select another candidate, but the majority of the party refused to do this. While some Democrats manifested a willingness to accept Clingman as a compromise, the major portion of the party were disposed to accept no substitute for the original nomination of the party caucus. As a result of the deadlock the General Assembly adjourned without electing a successor to Mangum.

A good deal of bitterness was naturally manifested over the failure to elect a senator. The Democratic newspapers had been almost, if not altogether, unanimously in favor of the election of Dobbin; and a number of the editors were very critical of Saunders and his partisans for having blocked the choice of the party caucus.

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[67] *Standard,* January 8, 1853.

[68] *Ibid.,* January 1, 1853.

[69] Saunders voted for Burton Craige; Love, of Haywood, and Christmas, of Warren, joined with a number of Whigs in voting for Saunders; Cotton, of Chatham, and Watson, of Johnston, joined with a number of Whigs in voting for Shepard, of Wake.—*Standard,* January 1, 1853.

ASA BIGGS

The Democrats had a safe majority in the General Assembly of 1854, and with the failure of 1852 before them the members of the party were in a position to act with a greater degree of accord. Two United States senators were to be elected. Dobbin, who was now Secretary to the Navy in the cabinet of President Pierce, wrote his friends in the state requesting them to abstain from presenting his name to the legislature as a candidate. The Democratic caucus voted on the names of Biggs, Reid, Clingman, Craige, and Ruffin. The nominations went to Biggs and Reid, and these men were elected without difficulty over George E. Badger and D. M. Barringer, the Whig candidates.

When in May, 1858, Asa Biggs resigned his place in the United States Senate and accepted the appointment of United States district judge, Governor Bragg appointed Thomas L. Clingman to fill the vacancy. The appointment was well received, especially by the incumbent, who had long cherished the ambition to serve in the Senate.

A rumor gained currency in 1858 to the effect that an alliance had been formed between Clingman, Holden, Biggs and Bragg "by which Holden was to be elected governor. Biggs was to resign from the Senate and go on the federal bench, Clingman was to be appointed by Bragg to succeed him (Biggs), and Bragg himself was to be elected to the Senate to succeed Reid."[70] Whether or not any such alliance was formed is problematical, but, with the exception of the election of Holden, the arrangement suggested in the rumor was carried out.

Clingman was elected to succeed himself by the General Assembly of 1858-59. Reid was anxious to succeed himself, but before the meeting of the General Assembly he had learned that his place would be seriously contested.[71] On the advice of his friends he went to Raleigh, in the interest of his candidacy, when the legislature convened. But his activities had come too late, for, long before Reid had suspected that there would be formidable opposition to his reëlection, a faction in the party had decreed his political retirement.[72] Clingman, an adroit politician, was accused of proposing "a combination of western and eastern men for his success and the election of Governor Bragg or some other gentleman east of Raleigh."[73] At any rate Clingman succeeded in gaining the first election, and then objection was made to Reid on the grounds that it would not be expedient to have both the senators coming from the West.

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[70] Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

[71] John T. Gilmore to David S. Reid, October 8, 1858, David S. Reid Papers, IV (1856-80), 470. Gilmore wrote Reid that in certain sections of the state there was "a strong disposition to ignore your claims or crow'd you out."

When it was definitely understood that Bragg would be a candidate for the Senate, Holden decided to enter the contest in opposition to him. The *Raleigh Register* expressed the irony of this situation in the following statement: ". . . the contest for the seat now filled by Mr. Reid will be between Gov. Bragg and Mr. Holden. But it will be asked, what is to become of Mr. Reid? Aye, 'there's the rub,' and most extraordinary is it that in an overwhelmingly Democratic Legislature, there should be any rub at all—that there should be any doubt about the reëlection of a man who has done so much for the cause of Democracy in North Carolina."[74] The supporters of Reid resented Holden's entrance in the election, and when it was understood that it would be impossible to reëlect the senator, his partisans gave their support to Bragg, who received the caucus nomination on the second ballot.

The failure to receive reëlection was naturally a disappointment to Reid, though he stated in a letter to his wife that he bore the misfortune with better grace than did his friends.[75] The *Register* evidently got some satisfaction out of contributing the following comment as a climax to the episode:

> Mr. Reid left Raleigh on Wednesday morning a broken hearted, but deeply enraged man, breathing out complaints, as we hear, about Citizen Holden's course towards him, in as much as, with the Citizen out of the ring, he would have been "cock sure" of re-election. When the train went westward on Wednesday morning, it certainly carried off a "bruised Reed." Whether

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[72] John W. Ellis to David S. Reid, Jan. 1, 1859, *ibid.*

[73] Wm. N. Geffroy to D. S. Reid, Sept. 28, 1858, *ibid.*

[74] *Raleigh Register,* November 17, 1858.

[75] D. S. Reid to Mrs. D. S. Reid, December 7, 1858, David S. Reid Papers, Vol. IV.

the vapour left behind was that of "Smoking flax," will perhaps be known one of these days.[76]

THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS OF 1852, 1856, AND 1860

In May, 1852, the *Wilmington Journal* made the observation that "if the action of primary meetings in the counties and subsequent resolutions in district conventions mean anything or are entitled to any respect, they express a preference—a first choice on the part of the Democracy of this state in favor of Mr. Buchanan."[77] This attachment for Buchanan was fully demonstrated by the North Carolina delegation in the national convention, for they cast sixteen undivided ballots for the "noble son of the Old Keystone." When it was demonstrated that Buchanan could not obtain the nomination the delegation turned to William L. Marcy of New York. The candidacy of Marcy proving also unsuccessful, the leader of the North Carolina delegation, James C. Dobbin, announced the vote of North Carolina for Franklin Pierce in a speech sufficiently electrifying to lead a stampede for the favorite son of New Hampshire. The *Petersburg* (Va.) *Democrat* in commenting on the speech made by Dobbin stated:

> It was the Hon. J. C. Dobbin, of Fayetteville, who announced the vote of North Carolina, and at the same time spoke in favor of Gen. Pierce's nomination. This speech of Mr. Dobbin's was decidedly the best speech made in the Convention. It was made at a critical moment, it was exactly to the purpose, it was eloquent and stirring. In our opinion, it contributed more to the nomination of Gen. Pierce than all other causes combined. It created an enthusiasm for him which spread like fire throughout the Southern Delegations.[78]

Dobbin was not the only North Carolinian who took a prominent part in the proceeding of the national convention of 1852. Romulus M. Saunders was chairman *pro tem.*, Duncan K. McRae was active as a member of the committee on resolutions, and a number of other delegates were prominently identified with other work of importance. The accomplishments of the convention were satisfactory to the Democrats of the state, the nomination of Pierce being well received and the nominee for vice-president, William R. King, being proudly hailed as a native of the state.

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[76] *Raleigh Register*, December 1, 1858.

[77] *Wilmington Journal*, May 21, 1852.

[78] *Petersburg Democrat*, quoted in the *Standard*, June 16, 1852.

The presidential campaign of 1852 did not excite unusual interest in the state; in fact, the campaign was dull and uninteresting. The gubernatorial campaign, which had been a Democratic success, took a good deal of the spirit out of the national contest. Furthermore, the Whigs were disappointed in the nomination of Scott,[79] although the nomination of William A. Graham for the vice-presidency naturally strengthened the Whig ticket in the state. On the other hand, the Democrats had a similar advantage in the nomination of King.

The official returns indicated a majority of 686 votes for Pierce. The popular vote for Pierce electors was 39,744, and for Scott, 39,058. The vote was 12,675 less than that polled in the election for governor in the preceding August, Pierce receiving 8,740 votes less than Reid, and Scott, 3,935 less than Kerr.[80]

The electors of North Carolina sent to President-elect Pierce a petition requesting that Robert Strange be appointed attorney general. This petition soon occasioned embarrassment to the Democratic politicians of the state. It had been the intention of Pierce to appoint James C. Dobbin as a member of his Cabinet, although there seems to have been no knowledge of this among the members of the electoral college when the petition was presented. When the wishes of Pierce became known in North Carolina, there was a feeling of uneasiness among the Democratic politicians, occasioned by the possibility that neither Strange nor Dobbin would receive an appointment, in view of the conflict. A number of Democrats busied themselves in an endeavor to straighten out the matter. A way out of the difficulty was suggested when the nomination for the Supreme Court was tendered George E. Badger. A leading Democrat wrote Governor Reid urging him to appoint Strange to the Senate if Badger went to the Supreme Court, thus leaving Pierce free to appoint Dobbin to his cabinet.[81] This plan did not materialize, as Badger did not leave the Senate. Finally Governor Reid was prevailed upon to write President-elect Pierce and make known to him that "notwithstanding the recommendation of Judge Strange for attorney-generalship, the appointment of Mr. Dobbin to a place in the Cabinet would give entire satisfaction to the party in North Carolina."[82]

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[79] *Raleigh Register,* November 10, 1852.

[80] *Standard,* November 17, 1852.

President Pierce tendered the appointment of secretary of the navy to Dobbin. The appointment was well received throughout the country. A Virginia newspaper in commenting on it stated: "No man more richly deserves it—none is more able to discharge the office with its attendant duties and responsibilities."[83] Dobbin, when in office, proved that the comment was not mere flattery.

As the breach between North and South widened it appeared evident for some time that the renomination of Pierce would not be acceptable to North Carolinians. However, as the President gave evidence of decided leanings toward the South in the national controversy, a favorable attitude developed. In September, 1856, Bedford Brown wrote James Buchanan, stating:

> Before the last annual message of Gen. Pierce and that subsequently written on Kansas affairs, you, I believe, would have been decidedly the choice of the Democratic party of N. Carolina. This, however, together with the influence from Washington occasioned a change in favor of the former.[84]

Several newspapers commended Pierce for his fairness to the South and asserted that he was entitled to renomination. Nevertheless there were some misgivings regarding the availability of the President for a second term, and there appeared in the state advocates of several other candidates with Buchanan supporters appearing to be most numerous among those who opposed the renomination of Pierce.

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[81] John H. Wheeler to David S. Reid, January 5, 1853, David S. Reid Papers, III (1850-56), 306.

[82] Robert K. Bryan to David S. Reid, January 20, 1853, *ibid.*, p. 307.

[83] *Petersburg Democrat*, quoted in the *Standard*, March 9, 1853.

[84] Bedford Brown to James Buchanan, Sept. 21, 1856, "Selections from the Correspondence of Bedford Brown," *Trinity College Historical Papers*, Series VI, p. 89.

In the national convention the North Carolina delegation voted for Pierce through the fourteenth ballot. On the fifteenth ballot the delegation turned to Stephen A. Douglas, and on the seventeenth ballot North Carolina joined with the majority for Buchanan.[85] The Democratic state convention had recommended Dobbin to the national convention as a candidate for vice-president, but he got only thirteen votes in the first ballot, and Breckinridge was nominated on the second ballot.[86]

The nominations of the national convention of 1856 were very acceptable in North Carolina. Zeal and determination characterized the support given the candidates in many sections of the state.[87] In fact, many felt that the "salvation of the country . . . depended on the election of Buchanan,"[88] and with something of the spirit of protecting home and country the contest was entered with the determination to win. Of course the nomination of Frémont by the Republicans was responsible for much of the spirit manifested in the campaign. "The irony of history is that Frémont, the *persona non grata* in all this . . . excitement had been mentioned as a presidential possibility for the Democratic party in 1855 by F. P. Blair, who suggested that a Frémont boom be launched in North Carolina."[89]

While there was much interest manifested by North Carolinians in the presidential election of 1856, there was no doubt regarding how the election would terminate in the state. The opposition party was very much demoralized and had no hopes of winning; in fact, many joined with the Democrats in the support of Buchanan. The popular vote for the Democratic electors was 42,487, and the Whig electors, representing Fillmore, received 29,573 votes.

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[85] *Standard,* June 11, 1856.

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] James C. Norman to David S. Reid, David S. Reid Papers, III (1850-56), 405.

[88] Congressman Thomas Ruffin to Judge Thomas Ruffin, Aug. 28, 1856, *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin,* II, 518.

[89] This suggestion was made in a letter of Blair to Bedford Brown, "Selections from the Correspondence of Bedford Brown," *Trinity College Historical Papers,* Series VI (1906), p. 86.

It was not difficult for the more thoughtful party leaders in North Carolina to foresee that a national crisis was pending before the meeting of the Democratic convention of 1860. Illustrations of such forebodings may be had from the leading Democratic newspapers of the state. In a number of editorials Holden had emphasized the idea that the results of the national convention would determine the existence of the Union. In August, 1859, the *Asheville News* stated, "we predict a stormy session when the convention meets, and think it not improbable that a total failure to harmonize the party will be the result."[90] Eleven months before the meeting of the convention, the *Wilmington Journal* was giving vent to a feeling of despair over the convention system which would "allow New York, with her motley politicians and free soil majority and double-headed delegations to come in to claim three times the power in nominating a Democratic candidate that is accorded to the true Democracy of North Carolina."[91] The *Journal* indicated that the Charleston convention would face "obstacles of the gravest character" which would be interposed by "the violent or the intriguing of both sections."[92]

The national convention met in Charleston in April, 1860. The delegation from North Carolina took a very active part in the work of the organization. Bedford Brown, who had been mentioned for the vice-presidency by a number of newspapers, including the *Brooklyn Eagle,* used his influence in an attempt to conciliate the discordant elements in the southern delegation.[93] Holden also was active in an attempt to produce harmony in the convention. The platform committee was headed by W. W. Avery, a North Carolinian of the more radical States' Rights stripe.[94] There is evidence that his election had been brought about by the leaders of the cotton states in an effort to win the border states to the radical program.[95] On submitting the majority report to the convention, Avery supported the

[90] *Asheville News,* August 25, 1859.

[91] *Wilmington Journal,* July 5, 1859.

[92] *Ibid.*

[93] *Standard,* May 9, 1860.

[94] W. K. Boyd, *North Carolina on the Eve of Secession.*

[95] *Ibid.*

action of his committee in a speech of considerable fervor. The majority report of the platform committee reflected the opinion of the more radical pro-slavery element in the convention. A minority report was also submitted to the convention, and it was soon evident that this report would be adopted in lieu of the majority report. Most of the North Carolina delegation favored neither the ultra-southern nor the ultra-northern partisans, but were desirous that the platform be a reaffirmation of the Cincinnati platform of 1856. When the clause in the minority report pertaining to referring the question of slavery in the territories to the Supreme Court came before the convention, William S. Ashe and Bedford Brown warned the convention that the adoption of this clause would mean disaster to the Democratic party.[96] The appeal of these men, especially the simple and forceful statement of Brown,[97] evidently influenced the convention, for the measure was rejected by a vote of 238 to 21. When the minority report was adopted and the cotton states bolted, the North Carolina delegation was not led into following the movement. According to Holden, "If North Carolina had gone out, or even wavered, the middle states of Virginia, Tennessee, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri would have followed her example."[98] In the balloting for a presidential nominee the North Carolinians voted as a unit for R. M. T. Hunter through thirteen ballots, for Joseph Lane twelve times, for D. S. Dickinson six times, and finally the ballot was divided between Lane and Douglas, the latter receiving one vote, that of R. P. Dick.

When it was clear that no nomination could be made at Charleston, the convention adjourned to meet again in Baltimore. The North Carolina delegation received the general approval of the Democratic newspapers and leaders for the course pursued in the convention. In the Baltimore convention the situation appeared as impossible as it had been in Charleston, and all the North Carolinians except Holden, Dick, and Watson withdrew from the convention and joined with the seceders who met at Richmond and nominated Breckinridge and Lane.[99]

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[96] *Charleston Mercury*, quoted in the *Standard*, May 9, 1860.

[97] The *Mercury* reported Brown as saying: "Permit me in sincerity, candor, and a spirit of patriotism, to warn my Northern friends against the adoption of this preamble. Devoted, as I am, to the perpetuity of this Federal Union, and the continuance of the great Democratic party and its organization, I warn them, if they adopt this resolution, which I consider sweeps off every barrier to the reserved rights of the States, that the destiny of the Democratic party is decided." *Standard*, May 9, 1860.

[98] *Ibid.*, May 16, 1860.

The split in the Democratic party caused considerable concern among the party leaders in North Carolina. Douglas had some loyal supporters in the state in spite of the fact that "the sin of apostasy" had caused many of his old admirers to desert him. Under the leadership of R. P. Dick and Henry W. Miller an attempt was made to organize the state in support of the Baltimore nominee. With the direction of these and other interested leaders a Douglas convention was held at Raleigh in August. Thirty-one counties were represented by one hundred delegates. The two chief features of the convention were an address by Douglas, who had been invited to the state in the interest of his candidature, and the formation of an electoral ticket. Douglas made a bold attack on disunion sentiment and was received with a good deal of enthusiasm.[100] After the Douglas convention a number of the electors stumped the state for their candidate. A final move in the interest of the campaign for Douglas was the establishment of the *National Democrat,* a campaign newspaper under the editorship of Quentin Busbee.

The activity for Douglas in the state brought the supporters of Breckinridge to a more energetic participation in the campaign. In June, Holden had stated that he would make no choice between Douglas and Breckinridge, but would await the action of the Democratic party in the state.[101] When it appeared that there would be no official party action, he announced, through the *Standard* on July 18, that he would support Breckinridge on the condition that the electors would support the Democratic candidate who proved to be the strongest candidate against Lincoln. After the Douglas convention in Raleigh, Holden began a campaign calculated to show that a vote for Douglas was a vote for hopeless division in the North Carolina

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[99] Only Dick took part in the nomination of Douglas, however.

[100] *Standard,* September 5, 1860.

[101] *Ibid.,* June 27, 1860.

Democracy and would mean increasing the chances of success for the Whig ticket in the state. But in taking this step the Democratic editor was a belated entry in a movement that had gathered considerable momentum while he was still undecided. Practically every Democratic newspaper in the state was supporting Breckinridge and Lane by the last of June, 1860. The *Wilmington Journal* did splendid work for the party in promoting unity of support for Breckinridge. The force of the editorials of this paper in attempting to bring about party harmony may be illustrated by the following editorial:

> We have before us Democratic papers from all sections of the State, and we find them endorsing the nominations of Breckinridge and Lane, most of them putting up their names—none opposing them. Beyond doubt, his nomination is the nomination which will be sustained by the Democratic party of North Carolina. We have this news in private letters and by public report.
>
> Now what we want to say is this. Let us, in North Carolina, consider this matter as settled. Let us have no division in our own ranks—let us not be under the necessity of wasting any of our force in combating the friends of the Douglas wing of the Democracy, but let us at once by concert among ourselves be prepared to turn our whole force to defeat the opposition.
>
> Let there be no wavering now—no back-looking—no faint-heartedness—no criminations or recriminations, but let us rally at once around the banner which the great body of the North Carolina Democracy already delight to honor. We will thus preserve our own harmony and secure the defeat of the Opposition.[102]

The Breckinridge electors carried the election in North Carolina, receiving a popular vote of 39,711. Only 2,245 votes were cast for Douglas electors. The Bell electors received 36,640 votes. The local success of the Democratic party was practically overlooked, however, in the tenseness of the situation created by the election of Lincoln. That the nation faced a dreaded crisis was unmistakably evidenced in the private correspondence and public utterances of sober thinking leaders throughout the state. According to the *Wilmington Journal* the time had come when speeches and resolutions were no longer

[102] *Wilmington Journal*, June 30, 1860.

in order—the time had come when the southern people must "decide on some substantive policy and carry it out."[103] A troublous period was at an end, but the state and the nation faced an era to be burdened with graver and more tragic conditions.

[103] *Wilmington Journal,* November 15, 1860.

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